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FORMS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT IN GREECE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISIS

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Department of European and International Studies

King's College London

**FORMS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOCIAL
MOVEMENT IN GREECE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE
ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISIS**

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ABSTRACT

The object of this research consists in the various forms and features of social movements that have emerged in Greece during the current period of crisis, all evaluated as part of “the social movement as a whole”. The studied period spans from April 2010 to October 2011, and includes the emergence of different forms of mobilization (general and sectoral strikes, the “movement of the squares”, various forms of civil disobedience). The focus was placed on the forms of political participation and the transformation of the actors’ consciousness in relation to their participation and experience, in connection with (1) the objective conditions; (2) their own social position in society; and (3) their own conceptualization of the “political”. The development of new relations between people and politics as well as of various forms of political representation (existing and/or new ones) have been given special attention. Methodologically, this research focuses on two key points. The first concerns the theoretical context of social movements literature and its relevance to the Greek case, as well as the detailed study of the Greek social and political formation, of its class structure and of the crisis. The second point concerns the specific study of the social movement in Greece, including field research, and using in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The sample was chosen according to purposeful sampling, in a way that provided the opportunity to investigate the forms and the effects of political participation. The criterion has been to interview people with little or no prior relationship with politics and activism. Since the focus is on the consciousness of participation and engagement as developed by the participants themselves, and the transformative effects of action upon them, the theoretical conclusions discuss the issue of subjectivity and class consciousness within specific conditions, in relation to the popular perception of the political.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym/ Abbreviation	Meaning
ADEDY	Civil Servants' Confederation
ANEL	Independent Greeks (right-wing party)
DEH	Public Corporation of Electricity
DSE	Democratic Army of Greece (1946-1949)
EAM	National Liberation Front (1941-1946)
EAP	Economically Active Population
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
EEAM	Labour sector of EAM
EFSF	European Financial Stability Facility
EFSM	European Financial Stabilization Mechanism
EKA	Labour Centre of Athens
ELTA	Hellenic Post Offices
EMEIS	Unitary Front of Strong Labour Unions, trade-union group originating from a split from PASKE
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
EU	European Union
FRONTEX	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
GD	Golden Dawn (fascist party)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GENOP-DEH	Workers' trade-union in the DEH
GSEE	General Confederation of Greek Workers (in the private sector)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INE-GSEE	Labour Institute of GSEE
Initiative	Initiative of grassroots unions in the private and public sector
KKE	Communist Party of Greece
LAOS	Public Orthodox Alert (small party of the extreme-right)
META	Front of trade-unionists affiliated to SYRIZA
ND	New Democracy (the main right-wing party, of a liberal-conservative orientation)
NGGA	National General Collective Agreement
NSMT	New Social Movement Theory
NTUA	National Technical University of Athens
OAED	Manpower Employment Organization
OBES	Federation of factory trade-unions (in the 1980s)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIYE	Federation of Private Sector Employees of Greece
OLME	Federation of school teachers in secondary education
OTE	Organization of Telecommunications of Greece
PAME	Trade-union front affiliated to KKE
PASKE	Trade-union group, affiliated to PASOK
PASOK	Panhellenic Socialist Movement (the main social-democratic party)
POE-OTA	Panhellenic Federation of Workers in Municipalities
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
PPT	Political Process Theory
PWU	Precarious Workers' Unions
RCT	Rational Choice Theory
RMT	Resource Mobilization Theory
SBEOD	Grassroots assembly of employees working using motorcycles
SEFK	Union of teachers working in private tutorial schools
SEO-115	115 Associated Organizations of Labourers and Servants
SMO	Social Movement Organization
SMT	Union of technical employees

SSM	Cooks and Waiters' Union
SYBXA	Association of employees in bookstores sector of the Attica region
SYRIZA	Coalition of the Radical Left (political party originating from the renewing Left)
TAIPED	Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund
TINA	There Is No Alternative
Troika	Decision group formed by the EC, the ECB and the IMF

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INTRODUCTION

Social movements have received increased attention in the last few years and several theoretical frameworks have been proposed and elaborated for establishing social movements as a concrete area of research. After the 1970s this field acquired its own autonomous dynamic, largely as a result of the various movements occurring in the previous decade. The theoretical models emerging out of this broad conjuncture no longer perceived social movements as deviant and irrational forms of action, chaotic and disorganized, but as forces deriving from, and contributing positively to social needs, and therefore worthy of further exploration. This change of perception has produced key insights for establishing a framework for such studies. However, these approaches have referred almost exclusively to Western societies, and particularly to periods of economic boom and prosperity (Neveu 2010: 169). Nowadays, in a period of deep economic recession accompanied by intense social and political crises, they need to be critically reviewed to produce a more coherent framework for the study of social movements in the present context. Besides, the vested interests inherent in Western representative regimes, on the socio-economic and the political level, are being strongly challenged. It is indicative that, among the many studies of social movements, instances of research focused on social movements during such a crisis are rarely met. This is still the case today, seven years after the emergence of the current crisis, with founding figures of social movement theories displaying reluctance in revisiting the framework and the overall approach in the light of the new situation. This is the background against which the main social movement theories and their key features will be viewed and explored in the first chapter of this thesis with the aim of evaluating them critically.

There is, therefore, a pressing need to deepen theoretical descriptions of mobilizations emerging amid the current crisis. The Greek case exemplifies a rebellious cycle emerging in a situation of acute crisis inducing a high level of conflict and

cataclysmic changes in both the objective and subjective conditions of social life. Since 2010, Greece has frequently been the object of European and global attention, due to the severity and longevity of the economic and political crisis, and the social turmoil that has accompanied it. It was one of the first three countries, together with Portugal and Ireland, to enter the mechanisms of the so-called “bailouts” promoted by the EU with the collaboration of the IMF. This entry was immediately met by a huge anti-austerity movement in May 2010. During the next two years this movement intensified and peaked in several massive mobilizations, while the crisis deepened on all levels, despite, and to an extent because of, the measures prescribed. The nature of this crisis will be studied in detail in this thesis, based on the Gramscian analysis of the crisis of hegemony¹. Looking at the specific characteristics of the crisis itself, starting with a concrete analysis of the social formation in which it is manifested, is a necessary moment for such an approach.

However, Greece did not attract that level of international attention just because of the magnitude of the crisis and the intensity of social protests in the country, but also because those movements were part of a broader wave of movements that emerged in many different places in that exceptional year 2011, from the “Arab spring” to the “Indignados” and the “Occupy movements”. What sparked an enormous debate, both in the public sphere and among social movement scholars, are the new forms taken by these movements, more particularly their spatial dimension, the role of “direct democracy”, the fact that they developed outside all the existing organizational forms and the broad and difficult to pin down character of their social composition. All this opened up another series of questions about the understanding of mass politics, the role of parties and organizations, the issue of strategy and of state power. This thesis aims at contributing to these debates by proposing a specific approach and focusing on the specific characteristics they have taken in the Greek case.

¹ “In every country the process is different, although the content is the same. And the content is the crisis of the ruling class’s hegemony, which occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petty-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution. A “crisis of authority” is spoken of: this is precisely the crisis of hegemony, or general crisis of the state.” (Gramsci 1971: 210).

The last main reason these movements attracted such an attention is that they contributed decisively in the biggest upheaval any political system has experienced in post-war Western Europe, with a small party of the Left accessing office in barely more than two years. The object of this thesis is neither partisan representations nor the rise of SYRIZA in particular, but the movements erupting in a period of enormous fluidity of the political system, predating this rise strictly speaking. This broader sequence means nevertheless that the Greek case is of central importance for understanding the way social movements relate to political developments in contemporary societies and how this process unfolds at all levels, from street politics to the structure of the party system. Besides, this is exactly what the notion of “crisis of hegemony” leads to: those movements were not just sectoral mobilizations, they changed the whole social and political landscape of the country, creating a new situation from which the current one derives.

Obviously, studying social movements amid a crisis requires directly encountering and experiencing the environment nurturing the emergence of movements. Structural determinants determine the framework within which collective action occurs and actors are situated. Crisis phenomena are motivational for action, but insufficient as such; to explain mobilizations, political factors (opportunities and alliances, resources and organization, constraints, etc.) have to be taken into consideration along with the historical background. Lumley's approach on the social movements in Italy from 1968 to 1978 is a good example of this approach. The author examines the origins of the crisis of 1968-69 in Italian society² before discussing the emergence and development of the movements he has chosen to study. The latter are analyzed in relation to the broader environment and the specific circumstances of their emergence, without neglecting the role of visible and latent struggles and of culture (Lumley 1990). This thesis will follow a similar approach. Thus, the second chapter of the thesis, will examine the social, economic and political background of the crisis, the concrete environment in which it emerged and its effects on Greek society.

² His investigation includes the distrust of the state, the constitution of civil society and its discontents, as well as the role of political vanguards.

This approach also requires a framework providing a class analysis, since I argue that conflict must be interpreted in terms of class struggle. This class analysis includes investigating both its significance and the structural and conjunctural transformations of labour. Recent decades have seen fundamental transformations in productive processes, and changes in the world of labour have acted as a catalyst in changing the class structure of Greek society and the characteristics of the working class. The main elements of these new conditions have been a dramatic shift of the balance of forces against labour and important changes in the nature and structure of employment, leading to new patterns in the division of the work force and undermining labour solidarity and social cohesion. This new reality has reinstated a theoretical approach envisaging a supposed “end of work”, tending to define classes strictly sociologically and empirically, rather than as conceptualizations; and defining the working class too narrowly precisely in order to deny its existence. This analysis was engendered by a period characterized by special circumstances combined with growth and prosperity, resulting in a relative preservation or/and increase of petty-bourgeois strata. It is in those years that the Marxian doctrine of immiseration “was the object of much mockery” (Jameson 2011: 71). As Jameson aptly notes, “It is today no longer a joking matter.” (Ibid.). Exploitation remains fully integrated and dominant in the social structure, and is the basis of the formulation of objective interests, while changes in labour and the social structure are continuing, leading to the intensification of exploitation and inequalities: tendencies exacerbated by the crisis. Thus, in chapter III of the thesis, I will elaborate on the particularities of the class structure in Greece, detailing its historical background and the transformations it has undergone during the crisis. Emphasis will be given to the qualitative and quantitative specifics of labour, in comparison with the traditional forms and features of the labour and social movement.

Methodologically, what is of primary importance here is the “return to the concrete”, through identifying intermediate steps and the various mediations between the concrete and the abstract. This requires recognizing both the significance and the limits of the adequate general, “abstract” concepts, in accounting for the real world and

illuminating the study of the everyday (Barker 2007: 13). In our perspective, emphasis must be laid on the “concrete analysis of the concrete situation” and the active intervention in the conjuncture. The concept of conjuncture is actually crucial in relation to its class determinants and the relation of forces, and must be perceived as a double constraint, both posing limits and defining the terrain of a strategic perspective. Following on this approach, I will move, in chapter IV, from the historical, socio-economic and political background to the social movement in Greece in the first period of crisis, with emphasis on its two fundamental forms: the wave of strikes of the two-year period 2010-2011, and the “movement of the squares” of the summer 2011. I will thus describe the overall perspective of these protests in relation to their potential for expressing a different form and conception of politicization. I will argue that one of the main innovations of these movements was the expression of a people's need for a “move to the political”, in the sense of a re-appropriation of politics outside the boundaries of official politics. This challenge presupposes a discussion of the notion of politics itself, which will be a recurrent theme throughout this research.

In chapter V, I will present the results of my field work, based on in-depth interviews with participants of the 2010-2011 movements in Greece³. The main aim of this fieldwork was to investigate the forms and the effects of political participation and the transformation of people's consciousness through their participation. I was specifically interested in the relationship between movements and different forms of political representation and the consequent development of new relationships between people and politics. Therefore, I interviewed participants with reference to their previous participation and engagement, focusing on people with little or no prior relationship to politics and activism. I chose a qualitative methodology as more capable of producing findings illuminating the main imperatives of this research. At the same time, my approach will be differentiated from the firmly empirical tradition often

³ At this point, I should explain that, throughout this thesis, I will often refer to quotes from the interviewees. These quotes will be presented in quotation marks and italics. To comply with anonymity rules, I will refer to each quote with the letter (I) [interviewee], accompanied by the number of the participant, according to the chronological series of the interviews, quoted in brackets. Thus, (I1) will be interviewee number 1 etc. A table with the most important data on the sample is included in the Appendix.

accompanying qualitative research which accepts as input only the observed or collected data. The views of the subjects will be evaluated in relation to the specific reality and context in which they are posited, which is on a certain level independent of them. Thus, to study collective action I will follow an analytical approach based on empirical generalization.

Finally, in the last chapter of the thesis, I will engage in a more extensive discussion of the results of this fieldwork and their implications. The assumption here is that of a dialectical relationship between the objective circumstances and the socio-political and economic reality on the one hand, and the subjective factor and class struggle on the other hand. I will thus elaborate on consciousness formation and transformation, based on a combination of primary and secondary sources (including the empirical material from my research and bibliographical references). The key point is actually to comprehend the ways in which social groups become acting forces and how they can, or cannot, acquire an autonomous and leading position in the social formation and achieve a capacity to exercise political power. Our aim is to comprehend how these groups became a factor in shaping the conjuncture from which they emerge, by transforming themselves, in a process of collective praxis crystallizing “the coincidence between the transformation of circumstances and the transformation of human activity”, according to the Marxian third thesis on Feuerbach (Marx 2010b: 4).

I would like at this point to make one final remark regarding the choice of this subject and my perspective on it. It is, of course, clear that the choice of the case to be studied itself reveals the perspective adopted by the researcher regarding the object of the investigation. As Bourdieu has commented regarding classification, research usually implies some pre-constructed criteria on pre-constructed populations, without examining the procedure of classification and prioritization of criteria and populations itself (Bourdieu 1994: 66). I have tried to avoid such a pitfall by trying to constantly maintain an open perspective, which would foster a constant questioning of the viewpoint and the outcomes of each research phase. In this sense, and since the subject of this research carries heavy political and ideological connotations, I have, as

far as possible, tried to avoid, the imposition of my own ideological and political views on all levels of study. Having said that, a fundamental aspect of my perspective, as will be analyzed throughout this thesis, is that there is no such thing as an “objective” or “neutral” approach. A researcher is a person of her own times, living, experiencing, investigating and being part of the broader socio-political environment; she is thus inevitably involved in history as an actor. This is even more evident when researching a topic such as that of this thesis. This is a rigorous methodological remark, to be taken into account⁴. Gramsci has accordingly defined the “philosophy of praxis”, when noting that: “We arrive also at the equality of, or equation between, 'philosophy and politics', thought and action, that is, at a philosophy of praxis. Everything is political, even philosophy or philosophies and the only 'philosophy' is history in action, that is, life itself.” (1971: 356-57). Therefore, the very formulation of the problem a researcher chooses to deal with, the invention of new ways of posing it, the identification of its limits, of its internal contradictions, and of the openness of its outcomes; all these elements are connotative to some extent of the researcher's perspective. With all this in mind, and being constantly aware that it is precisely in the most difficult problems with which we must further and persistently contend, I will now pass on the investigation of the forms and features of the social movement in Greece in the first period of the crisis.

⁴ For Hobsbawm, “we are talking as men and women of a particular time and place, involved, in various ways, in its history as actors in its dramas – however insignificant our parts – as observers of our times and, not least, as people whose views of the century have been formed by what we have come to see as its crucial events.” (Hobsbawm 2006: 3-4). In a similar vein, Touraine has elaborated on “sociology of action”, being at the centre of the apprehension of social change, in which the scientist is not neutral but the carrier and producer of a knowledge of action. For Tilly, “every position one takes on the desirability, feasibility, or effectiveness of collective action is a political position” (Tilly 1978: 6).

CHAPTER I: SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY AND RESEARCH

I have described in the Introduction the main perspective under which I intend to examine the social movements that have emerged in Greece in the first period of the crisis. In the first chapter, I will start by evaluating critically the key points of the dominant theoretical frameworks in social movement study. This approach aims at highlighting the key insights of these theories, as a starting point for a social movement research, so as to describe and justify the theoretical framework to be used in this thesis. I will thus highlight the points to retain and the critique that seems appropriate from two perspectives: at the empirical level, based on the Greek case of social movements emerging in times of crisis; and at the theoretical level, based on a theoretical framework drawing on a diverse, and often contradictory, Marxist tradition. The main points of my derived framework will be further clarified in the last chapter of this thesis as the conclusions of the current study and the related fieldwork. Given the scope and focus of the current thesis, it is, of course, irrelevant to encompass all the aspects of the social movement theories in their entirety; I have refined my choice to those which are directly relevant to the key points arising in this thesis.

Thus, in the first section of the chapter, I will review the general configurations of the two main traditions in the study of social movements. The first one emerged in the US and the other in Europe, their specific perspectives reflecting the different traditions of the two continents regarding social movement literature. I shall begin by referring to the re-occurring feature of these theories distinguishing them from previous approaches to collective action and social movements: their perception of movements as rational, non-pathological acts. The role of resources, of economic deprivation and of systemic crisis in fostering mobilization will be discussed eventually. In the second section, I will review the basic tenets of these theories, and particularly of the US tradition which has focused more on concrete and empirical articulations of concepts related to movements. I will specifically present the concepts of “repertoires of action”,

“protest cycles”, and “political opportunities”, insisting on their consecutive transformations, concluding with more dynamic formulations.

This debate helps us comprehend how different theories conceptualize social movements and the main differences among them, particularly the inherent implications for how movements are treated and studied. Section c of the chapter will explore the different perceptions concerning whether movements' actions and scope are thought to move inside the sphere of politics, and their relationship with the state and the institutions. This section is of great importance for my research, since a crucial part of it refers to how the people conceptualize what can be called “the political”, which in my perspective, refers mainly to its conception as an active determination and a self-transformative process, as distinguished to its confinement to the official recognized ways of exercising politics. In the section that follows, I will deal with another key debate on the emergence of social movements in relation to the questions posited in this thesis: the “*why*” of mobilization, or the relationship between the objective parameters and the subjective factor. The role of structural determinants in the orientation of action will be investigated, followed by an examination of various approaches of the processes of identity-making and framing.

In the last section of the chapter, I will present a more critical overview of the main tenets of social movement theories, focusing on their weaknesses and deficiencies. I will argue that, in reality, the broader framework engendering the development of movements is neoliberalism and its crisis; these, in this thesis, constitute the specific conditions in which movements emerge. I will, thus, describe my basic view on the recent social movement in Greece in the period of crisis emphasizing a unifying approach while contesting the ostensible “*End of History*”, with all its implications, and positing a framework that deals with movements in their transformative perspective, in terms of both their social and consciousness dimensions.

a. Theoretical framework of the main theories.

Examining the basic tenets of the social movement theories; the first of these is Resource Mobilization Theory (hereafter RMT). This was first proposed by McCarthy and Zald, drawing heavily on economic models (and partially on Olson's Rational Choice Theory - RCT) and utilizing market-derived analogies and vocabulary. Later elaborations, such as the Political Process Theory (hereafter PPT), deviated from this approach by emphasizing the primacy of political processes in mobilizations. Given the relative newness and dynamism of the field, both of these approaches are being constantly revised and re-elaborated⁵. In Europe, the New Social Movement Theory (hereafter NSMT) emerged during the three first postwar decades of growth and welfare-state building called by the French *"les trente glorieuses"*. It might seem misleading to refer to NSMT as a single monolithic theory, since it is really a whole set of theoretical currents explicitly involving concepts of the multiplicity, plurality and variability of new social movements. However, many scholars have noted that, despite these aspirations, it is actually a rather uniform theory, though differentiations do exist (e.g. Psimitis 2006: 163-4). Of course, the distinction between these two main currents of thought is neither absolute nor strictly defined by their origin; various scholars have attempted to synthesize them and others have incorporated PPT into their thinking. Traditional approaches, especially Marxism, remain pervasive in the relevant studies: the influential work of Piven and Cloward, and also of Colin Barker and his colleagues, are indicative.

The US tradition, particularly RMT, mostly examines the *"how"* of social movements, while NSMT is interested in the *"why"* (Melucci 1989: 3, 22). Despite the distinct emphases and analyses on either side of this divide, an important and innovative commonality remains: compared to social theories of the past, both perspectives view movements as rational, rather than irrational and pathological

⁵ Although there is no unified "US school", since different currents have emerged from the initial theory, I argue that there is a certain tradition that can be referred to as "US".

phenomena. Indeed, prior to the development of the social movement field, most sociological approaches dealt with collective action as an irrational phenomenon, a pathology arising from crisis⁶. The Chicago School of sociology was one of the first to focus on the creative, rather than destructive, force of social movements, with Gusfield defining them as “socially shared activities and beliefs directed towards the demand for change in some aspect for the social order” (Gusfield 1970: 2). RCT has also stressed the rational character of action. For Olson (1965), people mobilize after a strict calculation of the potential costs and benefits of their action, while also taking the “free-rider” phenomenon into account (thus the need for selective incentives to motivate people’s participation)⁷. RMT views movements as resulting from strictly rational choices, made only after a careful calculation of effectiveness and of costs and benefits, and thus characterized by “strategism” (Neveu 2010: 173). As McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly have noted (2001: 15), “early resource mobilization models exaggerate the centrality of deliberate strategic decisions to social movements. They downplay the contingency, emotionality, plasticity, and interactive character of movement politics.”

Later elaborations have focused more on the interaction between different actors as well as on the role of causal mechanisms in the emergence of movements. NSMT does not conceive of rationality in the sense of strict deliberate calculation; for Melucci, collective action “is never a purely irrational phenomenon”, but “to a degree socially constructed and meaningful to its participants” (Melucci 1989: 191). It could be claimed that scholars of this tradition have adopted Bourdieu’s idea that a new sense of rationality needs to be introduced, where actions “are reasonable without being the product of a reasoned design or, even more so, of a rational calculation; [they are] inhabited by a sort of objective purpose without being consciously organized in relation to an explicitly formed end” (Bourdieu 1980: 86). Bourdieu has aptly contrasted the

⁶ LeBon (1896) is a classic example of this view, describing crowd comportment as the pathological symptom of a sick organization and influencing both psychological-deriving as well as mass society theories (e.g. the work of Arendt and Kornhauser). As Melucci puts it, in these approaches, collective action is “a form of social pathology which is produced by the disequilibrium within a social order”, which expresses “the normal state of affairs” (1989: 191).

⁷ RCT, although highlighting the rationality of collective action, proposes an individualistic concept which ignores crucial aspects of collective action.

philosophy of action to theories of irrational action, as well as to structuralism (1998: viii).

The identification of movements as the product of rational acts is related to the importance given by social movement theories to the availability of resources and political opportunities as being crucial for the development of a movement. The concept of “resources” embraces everything that is deemed necessary for acting: either material (work, money, benefits, services) or immaterial (authority, moral engagement, faith, friendship). According to Tilly (1978: 78), “mobilization refers to the acquisition of collective control over resources, rather than the simple accretion of resources”. More conventional groups have normally more resources at their disposal; however, collective action is also itself a resource that organizers can use in place of incentives available to more conventional groups (Tarrow 1989: 17). The role of resources receives more emphasis in the US tradition, although to differing degrees among the various strands. As Duyvendak and Koopmans note, PPT “emphasizes external political opportunities for mobilization rather than the internal resources that are central to the resource mobilization approach” (Kriesi et al. 1995: 145). NSMT, on the other hand, while accepting access to resources as a parameter for the development of a movement, focuses more on the “post-material” ones (information, access to networks, professional and communicative skills) (Melucci 1989: 35, 216).

Organization is considered one of the most important resources in the US tradition, while NSMT contests it being allocated a key role. In RMT and PPT, Social Movements Organizations (SMO) constitute a key concept⁸. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald underline that “the greater the density of social organization, the more likely that social movement activity will develop” (1988: 703). For Tilly (1978: 63), organization results from the multiplication of “catness” (categories of people with a common identity) and “netness” (networks of people linked to each other), forming “catnet” (the term proposed by Harrison White indicating a set of individuals who form both a common category and a

⁸ According to McCarthy and Zald (1987: 1218), an SMO is “a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or counter-movement and attempts to implement those goals”.

network). Thus, the importance of organization is connected to the networks crucial for recruiting activists, the development of a vision for the movement and the acquisition of knowledge and competences (Della Porta and Diani 1999: 113-4). In NSMT, in contrast, movements are seen as informal networks, loosely structured and organized (or even relatively disorganized); as “segmented, reticular, polychephalous networks” (Melucci 1996: 344); thus diminishing the essential character of organization as a necessary resource. This debate is profound, relating to the role and importance of leadership, the contribution of political organizations to the emergence, development and perspective of movements, and their decline towards institutionalization, bureaucratization or, on the other hand, towards radicalization, and will be further examined.

In our view, organization in the broader sense is one of the most crucial elements in the emergence of movements. It is constitutive of them, in the sense that “organization is not a simple question of delegation forms or decision-making processes; it is inseparable from the orientation and political perspective of struggles” (Kouvelakis 2007: 195). Apart from contributing to the effectiveness of coordination, perspectives and practical actions of movements, organization helps the movement in establishing a position of strategic independence vis-a-vis its adversaries and realizing the irreconcilability of its interests with the dominant politico-social system organized around the dominance of bourgeois interests (Shandro 1995: 285). Of course, major questions arise concerning the relation between organization and spontaneity, the self-organization in movements and the transformative effects of such experience on participants, which will form a theme throughout this thesis, and feature in the specific theoretical conclusion. This will be explored in chapter VI, along with overviewing more specifically the approach of organization by the various social movement scholars.

Finally, the identification of the role of resources contradicts social dislocation or social deprivation theories. Social dislocation theories (following Parsons and Smelser), view collective action as a side effect of rapid social transformation, arguing that the dispossessed, disorganized and disenfranchized strata have a propensity to form and

join movements as a result of serious crises or social dislocations (eg. mass society theory). In social deprivation theories, mechanisms of relative deprivation and frustration are used in order to understand social deviance and mobilization, as influenced by the Durkheimian concept of anomie (eg. Gurr 1970). Many scholars, including members of the US tradition and Melucci as the most eminent representative of NSMT, have criticized such theories as inadequate and insufficient. Embracing their argumentation, resources should be perceived in the broad sense, and not as simply concrete and material, otherwise we would not be able to explain the ability of the “poor” to mobilize, or the role of the crisis in the emergence of mobilization (Piven and Cloward 1991: 448, 455).

According to this broader definition, the poor may compensate for their lack of concrete material resources (capital, access, benefits) by making use of others, either material or immaterial (organization, solidarity, etc.). As Tarrow underlines, “contention may be the only resource movements control” (1998: 5). Furthermore, in the Gramscian sense of a political, social, economic crisis or crisis of hegemony (1971: 210), crisis plays a crucial role in the emergence of protest. Thus, as Kriesi and Wisler note, “Goldstone's reanalysis (1980) of Gamson's classical study (1975) found that social movement success is more likely in periods of crisis (e.g., major wars, economic or political crises)... According to Siegenthaler, the core of an economic crisis is constituted by a loss of faith in the established set of rules (1993: 178). This loss of faith in the basic institutions of society does not bring about a crisis, but it is the characteristic feature of a crisis... institutional change is most likely to take place during periods of economic crisis” (1999: 45). According to Melucci, “A conflict... within a social system may be brought to the surface by particular situations of crisis internal to the system itself”, without the conflict being a simple reaction to the crisis (1996: 22). The author defines a critical threshold regarding the link between expectations and reward, beyond which conflict appears (Ibid.: 55, 60). Shorter and Tilly also note that deprivation can be a catalyst under certain conditions⁹.

⁹ Of course they still speak of such phenomena in times of prosperity: thus, they invoke the example of a threat to the survival of a well organized segment of a labour force, or a sudden short term economic

Piven and Cloward relate economic deprivation to structural dislocation (Ibid.: 9-18). The breakdown of the regulatory capacity of a society, in conjunction with a weakening in the structures of daily life, in the sense of a breakdown of its routines and a constant re-establishment of its relations, facilitate mobilization, as they alter the way people perceive and frame their grievances. Deprivation and social dislocation are treated here as symptoms of historically specific contradictions in capitalist society (1977: 8). This is in opposition to expectation-derived psychological theories and theories of irrationality, as well as the social dislocation versions proposed by Parsons or Smelser, whom Piven and Cloward accuse of treating economic or structural crises as extraordinary phenomena (Ibid.: 9). In the context of this thesis, economic deprivation and systemic breakdown, and most importantly, their interconnection, are the substrate, thus the starting point, in which the social movement in Greece developed. However, economic deprivation and systemic breakdown never constitute sufficient conditions on their own, their consequences being more important in the collective rather than the individual level. Besides, systemic dislocation is not simply a cause of action, but also one of its consequences. In the Greek case, these remarks are quite evident, and are to be examined further. The almost immediate transformation of the economic crisis into a political one, and its intensification after the emergence of the social movement, exemplify the potential of that movement to further destabilize the political conjuncture, leading to further consequences and transformations.

b. Key concepts of the main social movement theories and debate.

As mentioned, the US tradition is more interested in the “how” of movements, while NSMT focuses on the “why”. This difference is reflected in the concrete analyses and targets of each theory. RMT and PPT focus more on more empirical studies, data and more concrete articulations of movements. NSMT, in contrast, concentrates more on an analytical, theoretical approach, often to the detriment of examining their particular

change in a period of prosperity (Ibid.: 10).

articulations. Thus, the US tradition has developed a series of key concepts related to forms of action, protest cycles and diffusion of protest. In this section, such concepts will be analyzed in relation to the implicit or explicit debate they have engendered, with particular regard to aspects relevant to the research of the present study.

The US tradition puts emphasis on the forms of actions employed by activists. The concept of “repertoires of action” was first presented by Tilly, who defines a repertoire as “the whole set of means [a group] has for making claims of different kinds on different individuals or groups” (1986: 4). According to this concept, “we can speak more loosely of a general repertoire that is available for contention to the population of a time and place” (ibid.), while, “at any point in time, the repertoire of collective actions available to a population is surprisingly limited” (Tilly 1978: 151). Tilly associates different repertoires with different points in time and so presents a coherent analysis of movements in historical terms (Neveu 2010: 77). The choice of each form is related to the resources available and the objectives of a movement. Della Porta and Diani (1999: 173-81) relate the forms chosen to their ability to express the power of a movement in numbers, to cause material damage and to bear witness. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001: 141) categorize forms of action according to their particularism, scale and mediation. These repertoires are thought to change slowly (Tilly 1978: 156; Tarrow 1989: 20), and reflect the historical background of actors¹⁰. At the same time, as Tarrow underlines, protest waves are precisely “the crucibles within which the repertoire of collective action expands” (Tarrow 1989: 20).

The above analysis, though very pertinent up to a certain point, may lead to a rigid categorization of movements and to the underestimation of their innovative capacity. Tilly claims that the chosen repertoire appears either as largely familiar to actors (“flexible repertoire”) without being completely closed to innovation (which is more often the case for organized groups), or as allowing a high degree of innovation without ignoring familiarity (“advantage-of-familiarity repertoire”, more accessible to disorganized groups) (1978: 154-5). He emphasizes, though, the rarity of protesters

¹⁰ For Tarrow, “Particular groups have a particular history – and memory – of contentious forms” (1998: 21).

being highly innovative. Thus, the “advantage-of-familiarity repertoire”, or even the “rigid repertoire model” (more closed to innovation), are more usual (Ibid.). This inhibition towards innovation is addressed by several RMT and PPT scholars, specifically in approaching the continuum between institutional and non-institutional action. Participants are not thought as capable of employing radically new forms of action since any form of action is considered as resulting from a previous, more familiar one (e.g. Della Porta and Diani 1999: 185-86). Tilly has characteristically stated: “Innovation is rarer, and harder to explain”. He considers that one of the main forms taken by innovation is “the stretching of the boundaries of forms of action which already belong to the repertoire” (1978: 155).

Tarrow lays more stress on the possibility of innovative forms of action, suggesting that competition among groups forces them to use innovation (1989: 221), distinguishing between “early-riders” and “late-comers” (Ibid.: 60, and identifying the emergence of spontaneous action outside movement organizations, Ibid.: 18). McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, in their latest work, emphasize the need for a certain degree of innovation by social actors in order to characterize contention as transgressive (2001: 7-8). They define innovation as the action which “incorporates claims, selects objects of claims, includes collective self-representations, and/or adopts means that are either unprecedented or forbidden within the regime in question” (Ibid.). The most innovative forms of action are perceived as creative modifications or extensions of familiar routines, and not inventions of truly new forms (2001: 49, 140). This approach, although it correctly grasps that unconventional action does not appear “like isolated volcanoes of social action from a plain of consent” (Tarrow 1989: 61), often fails to acknowledge both the radicalism and the innovative features of the movements studied in the current period of crisis. The NSM approach on the other hand, puts more stress on the innovative character of action since it views non-institutional action as a rupture from institutional action, and not as a continuum (e.g. Melucci 1996: 341-44). Innovation in NSMT is linked, however, to a vision of a supposed structural transformation of capitalism, which will be examined later.

Another key concept for both RMT and PPT is that of the “protest cycle” (Tarrow 1989). This concept addresses the need to describe the mechanisms under which a protest begins, develops, is diffused and ends, or, in other words, the need for a dynamic analysis of mobilization over time. Pizzorno was the first to lay stress on the cyclicity of the protest. According to his view, if we do not accept the cyclical character of mobilizations, “at every new upstart of a wave of conflict we shall be induced to think that we are at the verge of a revolution; and when the downswing appears, we shall predict the end of class conflict” (1978: 291). Tarrow has developed this concept of protest cycles further, arguing that movements appear periodically, arising from the conflicts that are inherent to capitalist society (1989: 3). The course of the movement within a cycle follows more or less the same logic of emergence, development and demobilization (Ibid.: 8-9). Each cycle has a peak, when collective enthusiasm, tactical creativity and attempts to gain popular participation in institutions and organizations rise (Ibid.: 79).

Della Porta and Diani underline two tendencies: firstly, each successive protest cycle broadens the repertoire of collective action, and secondly, the more radical forms of action are gradually on the decline (1999: 191). The concept of cycles has been variously criticized, mainly concerning its claims of periodicity, and hence it has not been widely adopted. This periodicity is compared to economic or business cycles, implying that movements follow some kind of economic trajectory, an approach ending up in economic determinism (Barker 2012: 4). Koopmans has instead suggested the concept of “protest waves” (Kriesi et al. 1995: 113)¹¹. In this concept, the influence of both external constraints and activists' choices about the movement's development is incorporated. Koopmans and Duyvendak underline that changes in the structure of political opportunities in a country may initiate a protest wave, whose further development, however, has its own dynamics (Ibid.: 244). Other models have also

¹¹ “Protest waves 1. are characterized by a strong expansion and contraction of the magnitude of protest; 2. extend over a longer period of time; 3. encompass large parts of the social movement sector; and 4. affect most of the national territory.” (Ibid.), the term used to describe more the magnitude and scope of the movement, and less its periodicity.

been proposed, although they also tend to prescribe a specific course for the movement, implying a rather deterministic perspective¹².

These models seem quite static, following the tendency to normalize movements' emergence and course. Thus, Tarrow has broadened their meaning, by suggesting the concept of the "cycle of contention", defined as "a phase of heightened conflict across the social system" characterized by "a rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilized to less mobilized sectors; a rapid pace of innovation in the forms of contention; the creation of new or transformed collective action frames; a combination of organized and unorganized participation; and sequences of intensified information flow and interaction between challengers and authorities" (1998: 142). This definition puts less emphasis on periodicity and regularity, and more on the diffusion processes, akin to McAdam's "movement society", expressing a more holistic way of conceptualizing movements.

Further, the relational approach of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly seeks to identify the exact mechanisms and processes that initiate and continue to influence an episode of contention. In their respect, regularities do exist, but these lie in the mechanisms rather than in standard sequences (Ibid.: 66-7). As the authors specifically note, "What is important here is not to posit deductively linear trajectories and predictable outcomes but to identify the processes and their constituent mechanisms that constitute different dynamics of contention" (Ibid.: 70). In an effort to avoid linear interpretations, these authors also underline that similar causal mechanisms may produce very different outcomes, according to the settings in which they operate, the sequence of activation, the combination in which they occur, and the interaction among them (Ibid.: 187). This is why placing similar mechanisms within different specific contexts may explain why some episodes end in civil war and others resemble a protest cycle (Ibid.: 186). This approach seems more appropriate to the dynamics of movements such as those studied here than the initial static model of protest cycles. However, as discussed later, this multi-factor model, although interactive, is not dialectical, ending at simply

¹² For example, the Karstedt-Henke model, which emphasizes the influence of external factors (cited in Kriesi et al. 1995: 117-8).

identifying in a cumulative manner the different mechanisms acting upon social movements. I will use a formulation respective to that of a contentious cycle to characterize the period of 2010-2011 under examination in this thesis, as a “rebellious cycle” (in chapter IV), bearing in mind this critique.

All the points discussed above relate to the transformation of protest movements over time. The same factors also play a role in the diffusion of protest over space. This debate is interesting especially in relation to the 2011 movements in many parts of the world (“indignados/squares movements”, “Arab spring”, “Occupy movements” etc.). Giugni has identified the role of the mechanisms through which diffusion occurs. The author argues that the movements’ “actions are subject to external influences and... the external environment is subject to their actions” (Kriesi et al. 1995: 181). Cross-national diffusion may occur when the issues at stake transcend national borders, and only when political opportunities in the countries involved are favourable (Ibid.: 182, 190). The challenge is to examine the conditions under, and the means by which diffusion can occur, rather than simply demonstrate it as a fact, or to model its rate (Ibid.: 184). The diffusion may be facilitated by organizational, cultural or political factors (Ibid.: 188).

We can identify two main approaches regarding the diffusion of protest: in the first, diffusion helps to transcend the specific problems hindering the development of mobilization in a country (Tarrow 1989). In the second, which seems more empirically confirmed and analytically correct, its realization is conditional on the existence of a favourable context in the country as far as political opportunities are concerned (Kriesi et al. 1995). Further, contrary to scholars who lay stress on globalization as a process ushering in a decline in the importance of national contexts (more typical of NSM theorists, for example, Melucci 1989: 86-7; Castells 1996), attention must be paid to the national contexts in which mobilization occurs (Kriesi et al. 1995; Fillieule et Della Porta 2006; Tilly 2004). According to our approach, it is more appropriate to study each movement in its specificity, as posited in a particular political environment, though, at

the same time, taking into account both the context of the global economic crisis and its consequences, and specific diffusion processes among movements.

Finally, one of the main components of the early elaborations of PPT was the “political opportunity structure” (POS)¹³. The POS includes all the structural and conjunctural determinants of the field of action and the political system that affect the development of a movement. Different scholars have proposed or focused on different factors constituting it. McAdam has summarized four main factors, which refer to the openness of the political system, the stability of the elite alignment, the presence of elite alliances and the degree of state repression (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 27). He has suggested that “*any* event or broad social process that serves to undermine the calculations and assumptions on which the political establishment is structured occasions a shift in political opportunities” (McAdam 1982:41). Della Porta and Diani have added the political culture of the system in which a social movement develops as a necessary factor of POS (1999: 202-07). Tarrow has proposed eight conditions of access to opportunity, five changeable and three structural ones. In the first category we find “(1) the opening of access to participation for new actors; (2) the evidence of political realignment within the polity; (3) the appearance of influential allies; (4) emerging splits within the elite; and (5) a decline in the state's capacity or will to repress dissent” (1998: 76). He defines the three structural features as: “one set of the factors revolves around the concept of ‘state strength’; a second deals with states’ prevailing strategies toward challengers; while a third relates to the problem of repression and social control” (Ibid.: 81). Kriesi et al. speak of four factors, including national cleavage structures, institutional structures, prevailing strategies and alliance structures (1995: 3-81, chapters I-III).

POS is a very interesting concept as it identifies crucial political factors influencing collective action, breaking with traditional approaches that only take into account macro-structural factors in the emergence of mobilizations. It presents, though, certain

¹³ Eisinger was the first to suggest the term (1973), adopted by McAdam (1982) and later elaborated by Tarrow (1989), who has defined it as the “consistent – but not necessarily formal, permanent or national – dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics” (Tarrow 1998: 19-20).

risks: the potential of repeating a strict, even schematic typology, and of a static model, the identification of superficial results and the neglect of the causes and deeper political reasons for mobilization¹⁴. In response to all these critiques, recent elaborations have abandoned the term “political opportunity structure”, and use instead “political opportunities”, in order to imply a more dynamic model, which also includes the concept of “threat” (Tarrow 1998: 71; Goldstone and Tilly 2001: 181), and gives significance to the way actors view the meaning of their action (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001). Under those conditions, the examination of political opportunities as the concrete political, social and economic background of the emergence of movements is a key concept in the approach adopted in this thesis. This is the reason for dedicating a chapter (chapter II) to the study of this concrete environment in which the movements of 2010-2011 in Greece developed.

c. Conceptualizing the political.

One of the most important debates regarding social movements refers to their political character. Both RMT and PPT, as well as their later elaborations, focus on the political factors that influence collective action. According to these approaches, social movements are political actors with demands that are addressed to the state, and extend the boundaries of mass politics (Tarrow 1989: 1; Shorter and Tilly 1974). These theories emphasize the process of democratization that follows a social movement, and the extension of political participation resulting from it, both quantitatively and

¹⁴ Kriesi and Giugni have suggested that POS should not be seen as “a funnel of causality”, as several factors limit its impact: the degree to which a movement is acting instrumentally, the feedback effects on the strategies of authorities, the modification of POS by the movement itself (Kriesi et al. 1995: xiv-xv). Psimithis has criticized its lack of interactive force as a concept, the weakness to specifically identify which factor determines what, its conjunctural character and its limited scope in a globalized era (2006: 277-81). Della Porta and Diani have commented on the limited ability to correlate causes and effects because of the many variables that interfere with the comprehension of the causal dynamics of protest and the relatively minor importance given to subjective factors (1999: 223-24). For Gamson and Meyer, the concept of POS “used to explain so much, it may ultimately explain nothing at all”, as it is “in danger of becoming a sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment” (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 275). In what seems an even more appropriate critique, the POS concept often reproduces simple and variable dichotomies, ignoring the complexity of several factors (Fillieule and Della Porta 2006: 18). Further, it may be seen as a structural and static model, suggesting a rather linear perception of the way that mobilizations emerge (Seferiades 2006: 15). Finally, it may give the impression that political opportunities create mobilization, while, in reality, they facilitate it (Ibid. :14).

qualitatively¹⁵. Here, movements are thought of as forms of political participation that broaden the limits of contemporary democracy by allowing people with no access to political power to participate and confront their adversaries (Tarrow 1989; 1998).

NSMT, on the other hand, argues against the political character of social movements. This is linked to its perception that movements do not develop instrumentally towards a certain goal and address the authorities in order to achieve it, but have a more expressive and internal dimension. According to Melucci, social movements have “shifted towards a non-political terrain. The need for self-realization in everyday life challenges the logic of complex systems on cultural grounds” (1989: 23). According to Habermas, movements develop their action in the socio-cultural sphere, protecting the “life-worlds” and the autonomous production of meaning against the processes of intervention and control exercised by politics and the economy – the “colonization of everyday life” (Habermas 1984-7). Societies regulated by discipline are replaced by societies regulated by social control, leading to what Touraine has called “the disappearance of the idea of society” (2002: 389). Thus, participants in movements aim to re-assert the control of various social aspects of their lives – identity, lifestyle, culture – in lieu of, and against, political or economic aspects. This need is amplified by a further decline in existing democracy necessitating the appearance of new forms of democracy and participation (Psimitis 2006). According to Melucci, democracy in everyday life undermines politics and opposes representative democracy rather than expanding it (1989: 172). His very definition of the political demand excludes the actors who, in situations of antagonistic conflict, seek to change the system, and do not accept its rules. These are not seen as legitimate political actors, whose demands refer to the mode of production and distribution of social resources (Melucci 1996: 234-35).

This difference of approach affects various levels of social movement analysis. In the US tradition, action is posited inside and in relation to the state and political power,

¹⁵ As Tarrow writes, “Historically, disorder has sometimes accompanied the fall of democracy, as in Weimar Germany and pre-Fascist Italy. But it has far more often accompanied its establishment, as in France in 1871, or its expansion, as in the United States in the 1930s.” (1989: 347).

often over-stressing their importance. Movements have specific outcomes, which are, in most cases, measurable in terms of efficacy. Such an interaction with the state and the institutions has an impact on movements themselves. Thus, for many of these theories, the natural course of a movement entails either its institutionalization and integration into the political system or its evanescence through its repression¹⁶. Such a “determinism of institutionalization” is often linked to a supposed continuous democratization of contemporary representative democracies (e.g. Tarrow 1989; Fillieule et Della Porta 2006: 85-112).

This approach presents several problems, which will be discussed in the last section of this chapter. Suffice it to say here that it idealizes a process of democratization in modern societies, which, especially in the light of the events of recent years, has to be contested. It presents a rather linear perception of the development of movements and is restricted to certain areas of collective action, excluding certain movements or revolts that do not present the same features (riots par excellence). The definition of a revolution by Charles Tilly is typical of this tendency: “A revolutionary outcome is the displacement of one set of power holders by another” (1978: 193)¹⁷. This definition ignores a series of other parameters important in a revolution (change of social relations, of the processes of production and distribution, etc.), while, even in a strictly political revolution, the stake is not simply the replacement of an elite by a new one but a challenge to the very form of political power itself. Finally, this concept of mere “displacement” of power holders misinterprets the role of the state in capitalism. Every specific political form (in the sense of the state) is a reflection of the dominant social relations. The state expresses, in Marxist terms, the collective strategic interests of the dominant class (whereas it maintains its relative autonomy in relation to this dominant class in order to satisfy its role in the long-term). Thus, it is not a neutral

¹⁶ See the work of Tarrow on Italy (1989: 288). Groux and Pernot when discussing the strikes in France detect the “metamorphosis of the revolutionary strike into a creative strike of rights”, increasingly institutionalized in modern societies (2008: 39), the strike being transformed into an instrument of social and historical compromise (2008: 39-43).

¹⁷ Tilly's definition of revolution is also accepted by Melucci, who rejects the “historicist idea of revolutions”, fading, according to him, in contemporary societies (1996: 362, 366).

mechanism where the holders of power may simply alternate irrespective of the interests they express.

In the NSM approach, movements do not primarily have a “political” dimension, as mentioned. They are constituted not just by a burst of mobilizations but also latently, by the interplay of submerged networks. “Movements live in another dimension: in the everyday network of social relations, in the capacity and will to re-appropriate space and time and in the attempt to practice alternative life-styles” (Melucci 1989: 71). Melucci claims that these latent forms of action are both pre-political (rooted in everyday life experiences) and meta-political (in that they cannot be completely represented by political forces) (Ibid: 72). The cultural and moral dimension of action is far more important than the instrumental or political one (Touraine 1984)¹⁸. Movements address cultural and not just political issues. They are supposed to be “action systems”, and actors are not subjects acting in a unity of purposes; their objectives are plural and contradictory (Touraine 1996: 78).

As a result, movements do not turn instrumentally towards the state and institutions, but, in a sense, they bypass them. They do not refer to political power in order to satisfy certain demands, and similarly, they do not wish to negotiate with it (Melucci 1989: 3). They are more “local” and issue-oriented. Thus, neither their efficacy nor their success is very important, though they may end up producing certain outcomes (institutional change, selection of new elites, cultural innovation etc.) (Ibid: 75). Melucci criticizes approaches that only take into account the political dimension of movements as having a tendency to falsely politicize demands, to undermine non-visible forms of action and to reduce all spheres to the political (1996: 99; 1989: 44). He underlines that today the distinction between production and reproduction tends to be blurred. Demands are thus no longer restricted to the productive process but address many other issues referring to the reproduction sphere (time, space, personal relations, individual self-hood, life, health, nature, sexuality, communication, etc.) (1996: 100-01). Consequently, movement actors are thought to be indifferent to capturing state power

¹⁸ As the author characteristically states later: “The world of rational instrumental action... is dissolving in the instability of the market and the unpredictable nature of many processes of change” (2002: 389).

and are specifically opposed to Leninist organizations; they simply ask for public spaces not dominated by political parties and political power (Melucci 1989: 79, 173). Melucci's approach concerning the importance of the reproduction sphere and of the everyday network of social relations is an important contribution. I will however argue that, based on a different definition of the political which will be later suggested, these spheres are deeply political and intensify rather than diminish the political character of movements.

Furthermore, social movements, according to NSMT, are no longer instrumental, but identity-oriented and constitute themselves the goal. With their participants seeking personal transformation, they serve to build an identity. These theories go even further by positing that movements are not forces oriented towards radical social change but “nomads of the present”¹⁹. This “presentism” is aptly commented on by Kouvelakis as incorporating the premise of the “End of History”; the present is disconnected from both the past and future, appearing eternal and precluding the possibility of a credible horizon of emancipation (2007: 169). Collective action often seems to have a value only per se, ostensibly having as a sole objective influencing the formation of subjectivity. I can only agree with Melucci's own critique at this point, that such a perception contains within it the risk of atomization, the fragmentation of conflicts and of capacities for struggle, a particularism and conservation of the existent, an “escapist withdrawal into the illusion of an individual and a Nature magically freed from the constraints of social behaviour” (Melucci 1996: 111). As Ross argues, a perception that views movements as the expression of “a conquest of autonomy”, a return to “private life”, can be more compatible with, or harnessed by, political power or those aiming to defuse and depoliticize protest²⁰. Contrarily, “expressive struggles”, such as those of women or gay individuals, became mass struggles only to the extent that they succeeded in rendering “political” questions that had previously been held to be private

¹⁹ Characteristically, if, for Melucci, the Left refers to the future and the Right to the past, social movements refer simply to the present (1989:168).

²⁰ This attestation does not at all aim to ignore, or even underestimate, the long term effect of participation on the individual, and the profound impact this experience can have on the way individuals concerned “see the world” and thus their propensity for future action. This is besides the main focus of this thesis, under a collective, political perspective.

(Ross 2002: 156). In RMT and PPT, on the other hand, movements are mainly seen as the result of instrumental and strategy-oriented actions, with an expressive aspect²¹. The concrete outcomes of movements and their success, either referring to the accomplishment of their concrete goals, or to the political system and the institutions, or to the distribution of power, are thoroughly studied in these approaches.

Another important consequence of the debate concerning the political character of movements is the different approaches towards the distinction between conventional and unconventional action. For RMT and PPT, there is no clear boundary between institutionalized and non-institutionalized action (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 6, 41; Kriesi et al. 1995: xii). The main difference between the two is that in “contained contention”, all parties to the conflict were previously established as constituted political actors, whereas in “transgressive contention”, at least some parties are newly self-identified political actors and employ innovative collective action techniques (Ibid.: 7-8). This definition contains an analytical distinction between conventional and unconventional forms, leading even to contention about the categorization of specific forms²². This strict typology, often classical in RMT and PPT, underestimates the dynamics of forms of action used by movements, and the fact that, in contemporary parliamentary regimes, many of these forms are neither unconventional nor completely conventional. There are of course differences among scholars regarding this distinction between institutional and non-institutional politics. McAdam stresses the position of movements outside the core of the institutional political system, implying that, if institutional politics were open enough to include movements, the latter would not need to exist (1982: 6, 20). Yet, while properly noting the weakness of the political system to fully assimilate movements²³, he underestimates the opposite case – that movements themselves are not simply reducible to institutional politics. For Tilly, there is “a great continuity between open conflict and routine contention for power” and not “a separate

²¹ Often resulting to a strict typology of demands according to their character (Kriesi et al. 1995: 83-92; Tarrow 1989: 123-26).

²² For example, Kriesi and Duyvendak think of strikes as unconventional forms (Kriesi et al. 1995: 24), whilst for Tarrow, they are entirely conventional (1989: 68).

²³ When, for example, he states that movements are “a tactical response to the harsh realities of a closed and coercive political system” (Ibid.: 20).

realm of contentious, extra-ordinary collective action which requires a separate mode of explanation” (1978: 50). In such approaches, the action of movements is generally integrated into the principal ways of “making politics”. The notion of “conflict” is trivialized (or, even worse, its trivialization is attributed to participants themselves), as it is emptied of any properly antagonistic dimension. Further, this whole tradition seems to underestimate the material, socioeconomic bases (and objectives) of protest, and to overly focus on institutional variables²⁴.

Sommier aptly underlines the reluctance of militants in movements to accept an exclusivity between “conventional” and “heterodox” political participation, recognizing themselves as citizens who are active actors and expressing a need for “another politics” (2008: 110-11). Piven and Cloward have also criticized this focus on the continuity between conventional and protest behaviour as leading to an understatement of the clear differences between them, and the normalization of collective protest (1991: 435). For them, subsuming protest under normal politics ignores “the powerful role of norms in the regulation of all social life, including relations of domination and subordination” (Ibid.: 436). Thus, protest is not normal politics but outside it, and against it, as people transcend the limits of political action deemed permissible (Ibid.: 437). Indeed, this “normalization” of disruptive action seems to undermine its radicalism in both form of action and demands, as well as its potential. Certain PPT scholars have tried to respond to those criticisms by broadening their perspective on the character of movements. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly for example, in their influential *Dynamics of Contention*, re-examine various aspects of their previous analyses and, consequently “see no reason ultimately to restrict the application of our approach to the political realm, narrowly defined” (2001: 343).

In NSMT, extra-institutional forms of action are studied in detail. For Melucci, “the interests of the subordinate groups, by definition, cannot be entirely represented and become full participants in the political system; they are always, to a greater or lesser

²⁴ It should however be noted that, as Seferiades underlines (2010: 14), the objective of the tradition was to prioritize political explanations over psychological ones, not over social ones. As McAdam notes, “The social movement is considered beyond all a political, not a psychological phenomenon” (1982: 36).

extent, excluded from participation and manifest themselves through the non-institutional forms of collective action” (1996: 307). Here, conflict and its antagonistic character has a more central position in the analysis of movements. Melucci claims that approaches which resort strictly to the political market do not recognize this antagonistic dimension of conflicts, as they view them solely as articulating simple demands for a different distribution of resources or new rules (1996: 6-7; 1989: 39). For him, “the notion of a social movement is an analytical category. It designates that form of collective action which (i) invokes solidarity, (ii) makes manifest a conflict, and (iii) entails a breach of the limits of compatibility of the system within which the action takes place” (1996: 28). No collective actor can be totally antagonistic in the sense of being in absolute conflict with the political system; since, although the dominant groups deny the existence of conflicts involving the production and appropriation of social resources, movements with antagonistic demands cannot be integrated into the political system (Ibid.: 35). However, the conflictual nature of movements, especially in its consequences, is still underestimated since the terrain of contention is considered to be that of culture. By restraining this terrain to merely “cultural” and not political aims, activists are led simply to a (futile) effort to create spheres of living outside the control of power but inside the limits of the system, which is considered to be universal and incontestable as such.

In conclusion, these conceptions of the political character of social movements raise the issue of defining the “political”. Indeed, both NSMT and RMT/PPT scholars seem to define the “political” in a narrow sense – in terms of state institutions and movements’ relation to them. Hence the “political” is perceived as contrasting the “cultural” or the “economic”, and each sphere is considered a specialized, separate level. On the contrary, I endorse Ross’ distinction between political action and “*la politique des politiciens*” (2002: 15). Here, political activity appears no longer as a distinct and separate sphere isolated from social life (Ibid.: 145-46), Ross adopting Rancière’s view of politics as the disruption of normalization and of the dominant logic of the social (Ibid.: 23-4). Therefore, several forms of protest have political meaning,

even if they do not have articulated social change goals (Piven and Cloward 1977: 4). Duyvendak perceptively notes that this is evident even in cases of movements which are thought to be more identity-oriented (Kriesi et al. 1995: 169-78). According to such a definition of the political, the collective subjects themselves are not essentialist categories in the context of a static view; they are approached in a relational and dynamic way, in their unending interaction with the socio-economic, politico-institutional, cultural-symbolic environment (Seferiades 2004: 628). Adopting this definition would include many of the aspects of social life that the approaches examined above would define as non-political. Ultimately, the political character of movements derives from their ability to overcome the fragmentation of separate spheres, to transcend their particularity and to reveal a certain unifying potential, without repressing their specific characteristics. Politics is perceived exactly in that sense: not as a sphere like the other ones, but as the expression of the surmounting of fragmentation into separate spheres and of the possibility of an hegemonic dimension that enables the reestablishment of the whole over the partial, in their internal articulation. In this definition, politics is not simply instrumental but an art of life, a process of constant self-transformation, democratization and learning, of the constitution of the people as a collective subject.

The political is thus far from being simply limited to the established dominant form of politics, as a separate exercise of power by a body of experts and bureaucrats, and as a privilege, as an expression and satisfaction of the partial interest, falsely projected as universal. Such an approach, to be further explored in the following chapters, can certainly be detected in contemporary movements, such as those of this case study i.e. the movement in Greece in times of crisis. I will argue, after a thorough exploration of the movements of 2010-2011, that both the wave of strikes and the “movement of the squares” have proven such a political character. At the same time, despite having concrete demands, these are not movements constituted solely around and in dialogue with state institutions. Instead, they have tried to respond to the need for a different

social and political organization (evident but not exhausted in the efforts of self-organization), and thus have actually intensified their political character.

d. Why Wo/Men Rebel? Collective action as a cognitive praxis. Framing processes and ideology.

“Moments of madness – seldom widely shared, usually rapidly suppressed, and soon condemned even by their participants – appear as sharp peaks on the long curve of history. New forms of contention flare up briefly within them and disappear, and their rate of absorption into the ongoing repertoire is slow and partial. But the cycles they trigger last much longer and have broader influence than the moments of madness themselves; they are, in Zolberg’s words, ‘like a flood tide, which loosens up much of the soil but leaves alluvial deposits in its wake’” (Tarrow 1993: 302-3)

Having examined the main concepts of social movement theories, as articulated around the question of the political, it is important to equally examine the “*why*” of people’s mobilization. This point is also nodal to this research, and in chapter VI, I will argue in favour of a dialectical approach between the objective and the subjective factors which trigger mobilization. Among social movement theorists, NSMT scholars attribute great importance to the structural context in which people mobilize. Thus, they often analyze conflict as originating from structural contradictions of the political system: conflict has a structural basis. This is tied to a supposed transition of capitalism to a “post-industrial era”²⁵ which provides the fundamental framework of the whole

²⁵ “Société programmée” and later postindustrial for Touraine, information era or complex societies for Melucci etc.

theory. Power in this era is omnipresent and social control extends to every field of life. Hence, social struggle takes the form of individualistic resistance to manipulation (Melucci 1996: 91-2). Society is determined by consumption and not by class conflict, and social status is determined in terms of integration/exclusion and not in terms of hierarchy (Touraine 1991; 1984: 106, 110). Inglehart claims that, in postindustrial societies, the basic needs of the population have been satisfied and thus the latter turns towards more “qualitative” demands (1977). I refuse such a structural transformation of capitalism suggested by NSMT, a point to be further explored in chapter II.

The structural dimension in NSMT, however, is neither limited to this structural transition of capitalism, nor does it have the place attributed by social dislocation theories: the structural context of mobilization determines the conditions in which subjectivity is actually formed. Melucci emphasizes that mobilization is neither a simple reaction to an existing crisis nor a deviant behaviour, but an action determined by solidarity and by the presence of a conflict (Melucci 1996: 28-32). Aside from the structural context in which action develops, collective identity formulated by interaction, self-identification and available opportunities and constraints are crucial for mobilization to take place (Melucci 1989: 34). Mobilization is not simply structure-led, but presupposes the existence of a social problem, a shared sense of common interests and collective action itself (Ibid.: 193). Melucci generally emphasizes the way actors perceive reality and their action, something merely structural explanations neglect, tending to homogenize actors²⁶. The experiential and subjective apprehension of crisis is also overstressed by Habermas (1984-7) and by Touraine (2002)²⁷.

Further, the concept of collective identity and its interactive character is of great importance for Melucci. In his approach, the process of identity-making and the defense of one's individual identity are key concepts for participation in a movement. In

²⁶ His approach is however phenomenological, as when emphasizing the act of naming as a factor that constitutes social life, or stating that “it is enough to structure reality using different words for the power monopoly over reality to crumble.” (1996: 358).

²⁷ “The Subject must therefore be sought... not above social organization, in a transcended world, but, on the contrary, below it and in the *individuality* and *singularity* of each human being” (Touraine 2002: 391).

contrast with Touraine, whom he accuses of considering identity as a given, and with Pizzorno, who adopts the idea of an identity strictly defined by objective interests, Melucci views identity as “an interactive process through which several individuals or groups define the meaning of their action and the field of opportunities and constraints for such an action” (Melucci 1996: 69-70). Identity is no more an essentialist, given situation, but a relational, interactive and controversial process (see Psimitis 2006: 157-8; and also, in a different vein, McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 56, 133). The production of collective identity is directly connected to the interaction of individuals and groups, according to subjective (“orientation of action”) and objective (“conditions of action”) factors (Melucci 1996:70). In Tarrow's more adequate analysis, collective identity is not the result of structural change but the product of conflict (1989: 331).

Many scholars accept aspects of the aforementioned analysis of the so-called “post-industrial” society (indicatively, Kriesi et al. 1995: xix-xx; Della Porta and Diani 1999: 24-57). Nevertheless, they challenge the view that conflicts have a more structural and static character directly derived from structural determinants (Kriesi et al. 1995: 242). RMT and PPT theorists have been accused of completely neglecting the structural substrate of collective action, by claiming that structural reasons are ubiquitous and hence of little importance. The work of Charles Tilly (Shorter and Tilly 1974; Tilly 1978) and others (eg. Tarrow 1989) goes some way to contesting this claim. PPT has actually been an attempt to serve as a bridge linking broad social-structural changes to concrete mobilization processes (Kriesi et al. 1995: 239). Tilly has thoroughly worked through the macro-structural conditions of collective action, by introducing an analysis of the changes brought about by modernity and the ways action is affected by them. He has also stressed the danger of generalizing tendencies that are not universal or structural²⁸. Tilly has underlined that “the alterations in the forms of collective action result from changes in its determinants” (1978: 97). He has proposed a model according to which systemic factors can predict which interests people will pursue in the long-run, but the explanation of their behaviour in the short-run depends

²⁸ For example, arguing against technological determinism which could lead to the devaluation of politics (2004: 98).

on their own articulation of these interests (Ibid.: 61). Tarrow has stated that protest begins where structural conflict is greater and can be generalized before being diffused (1989: 10). The political, cultural and historical background in the country where action emerges is also considered as being highly relevant (Tarrow 1989: 37; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 14).

Therefore, in contrast to assuming any direct linkage between structural determinants and collective action, structural change is deemed to create the objective potential for movements, but it can neither overcome the inertia of personal inactivity nor develop the necessary networks and solidarity for effective action. This protest potential must be identified and translated into action, a process for which political opportunities are of great importance (Tarrow 1989: 21-3, 8). For Tarrow, differences among countries also put in question holistic structural models unless they are able to take political processes into account (Ibid.: 4). According to McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, “environmental changes start our story, but by no means explain it” (2001: 63). Such recent elaborations have emphasized taking into account “strategic interaction, consciousness and historically accumulated culture” (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 22). Here, “the crucial arena for causal mechanisms lies not in individual minds but in social interaction” (Ibid.: 56). This examination of the causal mechanisms of collective action brings indeed back a more structural approach, although, as before, it sometimes runs the risk of lapsing into a strict typology. In order to systematize movements in relation to causal mechanisms, it is necessary to bear in mind that the effects of several explanatory factors can vary radically with the social, political and cultural conjuncture (hence the need for historical grounding) (Seferiades 2006: 9).

Other authors have emphasized the structural determinants of collective action, without, however, accepting the aforementioned argument on the transition to “post-industrial” society. For Piven and Cloward, the evolution of specific institutional patterns under modern capitalism and their effects on the working class (increase in living standards, fractionalization, assurance of capitalist hegemony) have affected struggles (1977: xi). “Mass defiance” may not be simply freely chosen or determined since “the

opportunities for defiance are structured by features of institutional life” (Ibid.: 23). Patterns of daily life and the institutional context shape the behaviour of people when they mobilize, yet “within those patterns, their actions are to some extent deliberate and purposeful” (Ibid.: 18-23). Deterioration in economic conditions, together with social dislocation are thought of in these approaches as important factors for action; both perceived by the actors as such, provoking a challenge to, or even collapse of elements of the dominant hegemony (materially as well as ideologically). Piven and Cloward have introduced the “problem of indeterminacy”: “given objective conditions, such as structural opportunity, do not necessarily determine given behavioural outcomes” (1991: 445).

In a critical overview, NSMT scholars have the tendency to present as universal and general tendencies that are not necessarily structural, but correspond to a specific conjuncture. Scholars from the US tradition, although correctly noting the role of political processes and the availability of resources and organization, sometimes seem to overstate their role and undervalue structural determinations. Serdedakis has pertinently noted that “analysis is restrained into certain areas of collective action, while the stakes of social struggles, the mobilized people’s social position and the structural causes of collective action are put on the back burner” (2007: 390). Finally, both over-structural and subjective or phenomenological theories devoted to the reasons why people mobilize seem inadequate as a whole, though having much to offer. We are in need of a theory which comprehends dialectically structural determinants, crisis phenomena and the political framework, analyzing them under the criterion of *praxis*. Such a theory attributes a central role to the transformation of people’s consciousness through political participation, in other terms to the subjective factor, which becomes decisive at certain moments in history. This is the “philosophy of praxis” approach, which will be employed in this thesis. Following the fieldwork of this research, certain theoretical remarks on such an approach will be further elaborated in chapter VI.

“Frame theories” have contributed to comprehending such processes. The more recent elaborations stemming from PPT emphasize the role of framing processes.

Previous models have suffered from being static, failing to examine both the interactive processes within a movement and the frames under which actors perceive their action. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), as well as NSMT and especially Melucci²⁹ have focused on the crucial significance of interaction. However, in the latter, the re-interpretation of the environment by the actor is posited in terms of mental perception, ending up in being phenomenological. The transformative character of collective action and protest is also underlined by other authors, such as Piven and Cloward who claim that, apart from external interaction, the emergence of a protest movement transforms the actors' consciousness (by undermining the legitimacy of certain aspects of the system, and by making people believe in their own potency and potential to change things) and behaviour (through collectively acted out defiance) (1977: 4). Tarrow has also emphasized the transformative effects of movements on the activists, mostly regarding their motivation to participate in political life (1998: 165-69). However the transformative effect of action on the actors is, overall, relatively under-appreciated (Barker 2011: 8), despite being a crucial aspect of human action.

Therefore, the important elements are not only the *objective* factors that lead to the emergence of mobilizations but also how people *perceive* them – or, even more, not simply how they *mentally* perceive them, but how they *experience* them (Barker being the scholar to suggest *experience* instead of the more commonly used *perceive*, in 2011: 5). Michèle Perot, in studying strikes in France, has emphasized that, even when the economic conjuncture is favourable for the emergence of a strike, what matters is “*the conscience of the conjuncture*” as well (Groux and Pernot 2008: 52). Thus, the objective conditions must be experienced and interpreted as such in order for action to take place (Sommier, Fillieule et Agrikoliansky 2008: 29). The political context is important for this framing process to be effective: “Social movements are sometimes victorious in their efforts to frame situations as problematic, but only when they operate in a political context that offers them the opportunities to do so.” (Kriesi et al. 1995: 164). This is what McAdam has called “*cognitive liberation*”: the definition of the

²⁹ Melucci argues that human behaviour is purposive and capable of reflexion, but is also defined by the interdependence and symbolic exchanges between people (1996: 45-6).

situation by potential actors as “both unjust and *subject to change*” (1982: 36). This process through which people perceive and frame the objective parameters is an active, creative and constitutive process, which mediates between opportunity and action (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 16, 41). For Tarrow, the interpretative themes that inspire people to frame their grievances in a way that spurs them to collective action unify the movement sector. During the course of a movement, new interpretative frames are produced, while extending existing frames form a primary mechanism for diffusing protest (1989: 24). Obviously, in periods of a crisis of hegemony of the dominant frames and ideologies, alternative frames are easier to be imposed through collective action. The Gramscian analysis on the way to challenge the hegemony of the dominant forces (through the combination of a war of maneuver and of a war of positions) is relevant at this point, in the sense of leading to a counter-hegemonic bloc, with a determining strategic perspective (Thomas 2009a: 220).

Hence, “people cannot for long sustain campaigns on behalf of their rights or interests without identifying them with generally-held values and reaching out to others through a framework of common interpretation” (Tarrow 1989: 128). According to Seferiades (2006: 26), these propositional, strategic attributions of meaning to reality and to active participants lead to the instigation of collective action, the affiliation of actors and the deactivation of their opponents. Della Porta and Diani suggest that interpretative frames allow people to identify the problem as a social and political one; to find solutions, new patterns, articulations, relationships and, finally, motivation for action (1999: 69-73). Snow and Benford have drawn on the concept of framing suggested by Goffman in order to propose a frame analysis³⁰. What is important here is frame alignment, namely “the linkage of individual and SMO interpretive orientations, such that some sets of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary” (Snow et al. 1986: 464). Frame alignment is conducted through four different processes: frame amplification, frame bridging, frame extension and frame transformation (Snow et al. 1986; Snow and

³⁰ According to Goffman, frames are “schemata of interpretation” that enable individuals to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” occurrences in their life and the world (1974: 21).

Benford 1988), and should not be presumed simply on the basis of the existence of objective parameters, nor should it be perceived as conducted once and for all: “it is temporally variable and subject to reassessment and renegotiation” (Snow et al. 1986: 476).

The contribution of this approach is important since many previous models tend to consider only the objective reality and not its interpretation by actors, thus promoting a rather static model of participation as a teleological decision. PPT scholars have fairly criticized frame analysis as being constructionist and focusing too much on discourse and meaning to the detriment of the political conditions under which certain discourses become imaginable (Kriesi et al. 1995: 163). For Melucci, what this approach implies, but actually tends to forget, is the ideological aspects of such a definition of the action by the actors (1996: 348), since “ideology is a key analytical level for the understanding of social movements and should include the framing activities as part of the representational system of the actor” (Ibid.). Melucci is one of the few scholars who emphasize the role of ideology. He draws on Gramsci's analysis of cultural hegemony and Althusser's analysis of ideological apparatuses, emphasizing more their symbolic aspect³¹ (1996: 181-2). He claims however that there is a tendency for ideology to become “the principal channel of consensual manipulation” in contemporary societies, in which the subordinate classes cannot produce their own counter-ideology, due to the diffusion of social control in all aspects of social life and to the disappearance of the rigid distinction between cultures and ways of life (Ibid.: 224; for a similar approach, 1989: 97); acknowledging at the same time the necessity for frame analysis to be connected to the “deconstruction of the ideological dimensions of the frames produced by collective actors” (Melucci 1996 : 349). We cannot endorse his overall approach, which actually leaves very little space for the subjective factor, and fails to acknowledge the contradictory nature of such processes. Further, Melucci adopts a rather idealistic view of ideology, which deprives it of its materiality.

³¹ Psimitis also lays stress on the contribution of Gramsci to the concept of hegemony (Psimitis 2006: 282-87).

At this point, certain elements related to the constitution of subjectivity and consciousness need to be clarified from the standpoint of our theoretical framework³²: First, the theory of ideology must be founded in relation to the class character of societies. Second, ideology is to be treated dialectically, not simply as the false consciousness of the working class (this being a real aspect of ideology), but also as the mediated relationship of the subject to its material conditions of being, which also has a material dimension³³. Besides, as Žižek emphasizes, “It is not sufficient to oppose the way things ‘objectively are’ to the way they ‘merely appear to us’: the way they appear (to the observer) affects their very ‘objective being’” (2002: 173). This assumption allows the possibility of formulating a critique of ideology (in line with the nature of the proletariat as simultaneously a class and a potentially classless subject - thus a subject carrying within the potential of expressing the universal interests of society and not merely its own, partial interests). In this sense, the Althusserian view on subjectivation as resulting only from ideological interpellation also fails to respond to the complexity of the very subjectivation process³⁴. Third, ideology has a concrete, material character, and is not simply a mental conception³⁵. And finally, the question of ideology is bounded to that of human alienation, which is, however, to be perceived in a historical and not an essentialist manner, as inherent to exploitation³⁶. In other words,

³² Starting from the Marxian formulation in the *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* that “a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.” At the same time, “men become conscious (of the conflict between the material forces of production) on the ideological level” of juridical, political, religious, artistic and philosophical forms (Marx 1904: 12). As Gramsci has pertinently emphasized, this conflict refers to all conscious knowledge, and not only to the conflict between the material forces of production and the relations of production (1971: 372).

³³ Viewing ideology as simply false consciousness underestimates both the internal contradictions of ideology and the ability of social subjects, of the people, to encounter their actual living conditions, to critically engage with their environment and thus to develop action as agents.

³⁴ Callinicos argues against such an approach, by stressing that, on the one hand, the ideological field is internally contradictory (consisting by more than one ideological schemata and expressing the conflicting interests of various social groups), and on the other hand, individuals are confronted by a multiplicity of social identities, drawing, thus, our attention to the centrality of social identities in the analysis of ideological phenomena (2004: 178-9).

³⁵ “Furthermore, another proposition of the philosophy of praxis is also forgotten: that “popular beliefs” and similar ideas are themselves material forces.” (Gramsci 1971: 165).

³⁶ “But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.” according to the 6th Thesis on Feuerbach (Marx 2010b: 4). Two preconditions are necessary in order for the category of alienation to be useful: (1) to be cut off from any philosophy of reification (or fetishism or objectification of self), what would lead us to an anthropological variation of idealism; and (2) to be thought strictly under the concept of exploitation (Althusser 1977: 89).

social representations from the broader environment, conceptualized in the widest sense as the socio-historical and political context (thus including the objective parameters of such an environment) contribute decisively to both the formation of people's self and their perception of reality³⁷. These concepts will be dealt with in the course of the current thesis.

e. What is really happening today is neoliberalism.

In this chapter, I have examined the basic tenets of the currents of thought on social movements that have been developed since the 1970s. NSMT as mentioned, is based on a western-centred discourse and reading of the present postulating a “postindustrial” phase of capitalism as the primary determinant of emergent movements. Class conflict is over, prosperity is here to stay forever (and for everyone), material demands are obsolete, and people struggle to constantly enhance their quality of life. This analysis has always been intensely partial, nowadays, provocatively so, as large strata of the population even in the most developed countries are proletarianized, subjected to a violent decline in their living standards and marginalized. Thus, NSMT tends to “structuralize” tendencies that have little structural about them. This dispute over whether a change is conjunctural or structural is not simply a matter of typology; in reality, this tendency to structuralize the conjunctural reveals a different approach to defining and conceptualizing the structural. It has also been argued that this approach studies and theorizes movements “in a selective and biased way” (Kouvelakis 2007: 223). Melucci is representative of this view: movements are considered as “heterogeneous and fragmented phenomena” (1996: 13). According to him, no vision of politics can be totalizing, as “the system has no centre” (Ibid.: 208). Thus, movements are classified into categories (referring to feminism, ecology, youth, etc.) and studied as dissociated from one another; besides, the “grandiose political programs”, have

³⁷ Perceived in discussion to Gramsci's distinction between “good sense” as stemming from daily experience, and “common sense”, stemming from the broader social environment, but being incoherent and contradictory, thus open to new hegemonic articulations. For Rehmann, common sense is a “battlefield of contradicting tendencies” (Rehmann 2013: 127).

resulted for Melucci in nothing but totalitarianism and violence (1989: 189; this is what he latter calls characteristically “end of historicism”, 1996: 190). We are simply “left with only different ways of organizing, managing, and politically defining the existing world system from the inside” (1996: 190)³⁸. A similar argument is implied by Touraine in his concept of “cultural field”, when he underlines that the various actors as adversaries who constitute the social relation must necessarily coexist and act within the same cultural field, or else class relationships would be defined as relations of social war (1978: 50). Such a thesis leads to an underestimation of movements' radicalism, and of their ability to question the dominant hegemony as a whole³⁹. However, it should be underlined at this point, that the emergence of NSMT must be examined in a historicised account, one that actually takes into account the *reality* of the retreat of the labour movement and the emergence of other movements at the time.

I argue in favour of an examination of social movements as being part of “the social movement in general” instead of simply attesting their plurality⁴⁰. As Barker underlines, McAdam's “movement family” concept (and in a sense, the same goes for Tarrow's “cycles of contention”, 1998: 142-43) implies a much more holistic way of conceptualizing social movements, even though the author insists on the need to also treat movements distinctly (McAdam 1995; Barker 2012: 2). Of course, the perception of social movements as an entity (which seems even more appropriate when studying social and political struggles in times of crisis since they can all be more easily embraced within a single, coherent narrative), should not reduce their complexity. Furthermore, and despite the reservations voiced above, Melucci's approach is useful

³⁸ Indicatively, Melucci views precariousness as freedom (1996: 120). Choice is glorified: people are presented as mobilizing in reaction to the *too many choices* they have (Ibid.: 128; also Psimitis 2006: 299). This argument is dubious in times of extreme prosperity; in times of crisis, it is fallacious. Further, this view of power as omnipresent leaves little room for movements, at least those that would go beyond mere resistance in a very specific field.

³⁹ Eagleton's critique is relevant here: “For radicals to discard the idea of totality in a rush of holophobia is, among other more positive things, to furnish themselves with some much-needed consolation. For in a period when no very far-reaching political action seems really feasible, when so-called micropolitics seems the order of the day, it is relieving to convert this necessity into a virtue – to persuade oneself that one's political limits have, as it were, a solid onto-logical grounding, in the fact that social totality is in any case a chimera. It doesn't matter if there is no political agent on hand to transform the whole, since there is in fact no whole to be transformed. It is as though, having mislaid the breadknife, one declares the loaf to be already sliced.” (Eagleton 1996: 9).

⁴⁰ The term is Marxian, as approached in (Barker 2012: 1); Kouvelakis also perceives the term (emphasizing its use in the singular) as “corresponding to a certain configuration of social struggles and the labour movement itself” (Kouvelakis 2007: 213).

because of its emphasis on at least three dimensions: the ideological dimensions of the articulation of both political power and social movements; the fact that actors address issues that refer to the reproduction sphere, and not only to the productive process; and finally, the importance of the concept of collective identity engendered in a movement.

RMT and PPT, and their further elaborations, seem a more adequate starting point to study a social movement, especially since, over time, more attention has been focused on interactive processes and causal mechanisms. However, this perspective also views movements in a partial way, exacerbated by its frequently heavily descriptive and empiricist approach. Furthermore, scholars attached to this tradition tend to adopt a cumulative, multifactor causal model, in which the aggregation of different mechanisms and factors produces the outcome. Thus, research often consists in breaking the whole into simple pieces and studying them (and their interaction) separately. As Hogan notes, this is an interactive but not dialectical model (Kousi and Tilly 2008: 288). A holistic dialectical model, the components of which would be inseparable and antithetical (Ibid.: 289-90), is more appropriate for the study of the contradictory nature of social movements, while overemphasis on the political aspects of mobilization must not lead to underestimating cultural identities and dimensions, and the role of subjectivity.

Finally, RMT and PPT's progressive view of movements as promoters of democracy often leads to a certain determinism regarding their emergence and outcomes. There are three major flaws in the "protest cycle" concept and its corollary, namely the almost inevitable institutionalization which is supposed to follow each movement, including the schema of integration as opposed to exclusion: Firstly, such an approach actually embraces an idea of the "End of History". If the ultimate goal (conscious or unconscious) of movement actors is to deepen and expand contemporary democracies, no alternative visions of society are conceivable. Besides, in these studies, contemporary democracies are all too often considered more democratic than they truly are. Instead of affirming an inevitable institutionalization of

movements, it seems more appropriate to dialectically analyze the constant struggle between institutionalization and radicalization, tendencies which at the same time remain internally articulated. As Barker notes, “a rising protest wave needs to be understood, from its beginning to its conclusions, as containing quite contradictory impulses and forces, to both radicalism and moderation” (2012: 8). Attribution of “normality” to every form of action (including violent ones), while progressively aiming to legitimize movements as modes of collective action underestimates their radicalism (Serdedakis 2009: 3; Seferiades 2010: 11). This explains the weakness of such approaches in studying movements that embody a strong radical content and practices (Ibid.). Thus, movements must be examined also as an “interruption of the established order” and not as merely an extension of that order (Ross 2002: 213).

Secondly, these movements tend to be perceived in these approaches in a linear way; indeterminacy is rather absent. On the contrary, as Melucci has stated, “the future depends solely on our action purged of all teleological connotations” (Melucci 1996: 196). Melucci views, however, the future as the result of people's own choices and decisions, the outcomes of which cannot be fully predicted. Here, conflict is valorized as such, independent of and opposed to any concrete strategy, and the outcomes of conflict remain unknown, in a way leaning towards a particular agnosticism. From our perspective, conflict is interpreted in terms of class struggle, in opposition both to linear and over-subjective approaches. I endorse an approach which distinguishes reality and existence, identifying different potentials in reality, contradictory tendencies, and with temporality playing a crucial role⁴¹. As Barker emphasizes, the course of a movement involves “complex sequences of advances and retreats, leaps and moments of apparent stasis, expansions and contractions, peaks and downward slides” (Barker 2012: 10). In this new perception of temporality, time is no longer thought as simply linear, or predictable. Even more, “the present is necessarily non-identical with itself,

⁴¹ According to Althusser, we have to think necessity “in terms of a dialectic of the tendency, necessarily entangled ‘with countervailing causes’ (spawned, first and foremost, by the tendency itself), in which it is both possible and necessary to intervene politically in order to make possible the realization of this tendency. Without this intervention, the tendency will never be automatically realized. If this intervention is inept, the worst is to be feared: the mediocrity of a ‘historical compromise’ whose variants can be infinite, and which can culminate in horrors” (Althusser 2006: 94).

composed of numerous 'times' that do not coincide but encounter each other with mutual incomprehension" (Thomas 2009a: 281). The present is, therefore, only one of the feasible outcomes of the struggles of the past, even though, in the dominant philosophy of history, "the past exists only to better justify and magnify the present"⁴² (Ross 2002: 183).

Thirdly, emphasizing political participation yields a schema of exclusion, also evident in NSMT, in which the main problem is the "in and out" and not the "up and down"; the concept of exploitation is substituted by that of inequalities, and vertical societies by horizontal ones (Touraine 1991). This definition disregards the main objective of this process of marginalization: the deepening of the exploitation of both the marginalized and the "included" strata (Kouvelakis 2007: 45-6). Nowadays, with an ongoing authoritarian turn of political systems in certain countries (such as Greece), resulting in a more extensive social and political marginalization, an approach that views actors as simply integrated into the political sphere ends up excluding large strata from its analysis.

Finally, in respect to the social actors who lead social movements, NSMT suggests that they are not to be found within the working class. In its analyses, classes are not at the centre of the conflict; new social conflicts arise⁴³. Having said that, their challenge of a narrowly defined working class followed by a certain Marxist tradition, as an industrial working class engaged only in manual productive labour, has a lot to offer. This conception of the working class is in consistency to the one operative in this thesis, as will be examined in chapter III.

⁴² And "capitalism lives itself in a perpetual present" (Jameson 2005: 12).

⁴³ Yet, social classes remain selectively present in these approaches, since, even if not described as a revolutionary subject in the sense that the working class is in Marxism, the "new middle classes" are placed at the centre of the stage (Offe 1987: 77-8; Melucci 1989: 52-3). Thus, their actual tendency is the marginalization of the working class and the lower strata. Of course, differentiations among NSMT theorists do exist. Touraine, for example, argues that the whole function of society is a reflection of the struggle between two specific antagonistic actors who fight for the control of cultural concerns (1978: 113-4). For him, there still exist "historical struggles" (1978: 138-81), and thus a core movement that brings change (Ibid.: 170), though he claims being in search of it, since for him it is no longer the working-class movement (1978: 168-73; 1984). Melucci, on the other hand, claims that there is no "central movement" because there is no "central conflict", no particular actor that will bring change (Melucci 1989: 188, 200).

This primacy of the middle class in mobilizations has been partly adopted by other scholars, without, however, them emphasizing these ostensible structural transformations (Della Porta and Diani 1999: 48-56). Kriesi and Giugni, while accepting the dominance of the new middle class in the new social movements, suggest that its presence is not decisive (Kriesi et al 1995: xix). According to other scholars of RMT and PPT, on the other hand, movements go beyond, but are not separate from class. For the most part, these approaches still view the most oppressed and exploited, as the protagonists of movements. The primary problem in these analyses of class seems to be, among others, a problem of definition. Class conflicts are defined very narrowly in order to be rejected; they are defined as conflicts only happening in the sphere of production – and basically inside factories. Moreover, the way that this “new middle class” is defined does little to differentiate it from the working class (Della Porta and Diani 1999: 53). There is still an effort to generalize tendencies that have not been universal: in times of economic crisis, realities that once seemed evident are evidently reversed; large strata of the population are being proletarianized, and the most oppressed and exploited strata are at the centre of mobilizations. There are three main tendencies which make this argument clear: class polarization, the weakening of intermediate classes, and the renewed permanence of labour and popular struggles (Kouvelakis 2007: 24). All three of these are easy to detect in the Greek case. As Kouvelakis posits (Ibid.: 23), this “return” of social classes at the forefront can be assimilated to the “return of the repressed”, in the sense that what “returns” has always been there. Thus, what really happens is not that classes now *re-exist*, but that they become, once again, *visible* (Ibid.: 23-4). I intend to apply such a class analysis in my view of the social movements emerging in Greece in the first period of the crisis.

To conclude, I will support an approach advocating that what is really happening today is *neoliberalism*, and in fact, in crisis. This is a term that permits us “to speak concretely of contemporary capitalism, discerning the specificity of its transformations as well as the permanence of its more fundamental traits in the recent history of social formations” (Kouvelakis 2007: 14). Recourse to the past, and to the political, cultural

and ideological background of the given society, must be a necessary and integral part of research on current social movements (Tarrow 1989: 37; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Tilly 1978: 231-35; Kouvelakis 2007: 13). Representations of collective action and organization of the past do influence potential actors. Besides, as Ross underlines, “by asserting a teleology of the present, the official story erases those memories of past alternatives that sought or envisioned other outcomes than the one that came to pass” (Ross 2002: 6). Or, as Hobsbawm suggests, the death of historical memory and the destruction of the past, that feeling of a constant present, is another way to speak of the end of ideologies: if there is no alternative future, no differentiated past could ever have existed (Hobsbawm 2006: 17). Cultures and countercultures in society are also an important element to be taken into account. When no “*End of History*” is near, what appears more interesting is not to study movements in their particularity, but to reinsert them into a *grand narrative* (Barker 2012). This more unified study of movements should not be conducted at the expense of recognizing their relative autonomy and distinctive features, nor should these movements be directly reduced to working-class struggle. A coherent analysis has to start from the particular as if the latter contains the whole, to study their internal articulation and perspective. This is the perspective to be followed in this thesis. But first, I shall examine, in the next chapter, the specific features of the political crisis in Greece, the environment in which it has emerged, and the formulated framework in which the social movements of 2010-2011 have evolved.

CHAPTER II: POLITICAL CRISIS IN GREECE

I have already examined, in the previous chapter, the basic tenets of the social movement theories and have articulated the theoretical framework for the study of the social movement in Greece in the first period of the crisis. In this second chapter of the thesis, I will examine the social, economic and political background of the crisis, the concrete environment in which it emerged and the main features of the Greek society. This investigation includes an overview of both the deepest roots of the crisis in Greece, and the multiple effects of the policies followed in the current period. McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly have laid stress on the importance of the broader historical, cultural and political background of the country where protest develops, in relation to cognitive, relational and environmental mechanisms, and emphasizing “strategic interaction, consciousness and historically accumulated culture” (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 22, 14, 345). Starting from this line of thought for the analysis of the social movement in Greece, I need to first study this structural base combined with the specific conditions of emergence and development of movements, in relation to the political opportunities and constraints (in the broader sense).

It is well known that the international crisis first emerging in the USA in 2008, a crisis of a structural and historical character, affected Greece in a very particular and intense form. The crisis was not limited to the economic sphere but spilled over all aspects of the socio-political spectrum, exacerbating an existing deep social crisis, a crisis of political representation and of legitimation of the state and its apparatuses, finally leading to a nascent organic crisis of the state⁴⁴ (Kouvelakis 2011d). The dominant strategy of the ruling class since May 2010 has been the neoliberal management of the crisis. The measures taken, under constant revision, have aimed rescuing European capital and, in addition, using Greece as a guinea pig in determining the specific form of neoliberalism most appropriate in the new era. As

⁴⁴ This definition is in line with the Gramscian analysis on the crisis of hegemony, as presented in the Introduction of this thesis (Gramsci 1971: 210).

Lanara aptly noted in 2012 (2012: 4), “The programme has trapped Greece in a vicious circle in which austerity generates recession, followed by more austerity, new taxes and deeper recession, strangling economic growth, stifling job creation and putting a strain on social cohesion... After five years of recession, the policy mix imposed on Greece may well have set an undesirable 'record for one of the deepest economic slumps of modern times' (Reuters 2012)”.

These measures have caused a dramatic reduction in living standards for large sectors of society and an intensification of class polarization. These have been accompanied by an authoritarian turn in the political system and the state. Mobilization has also escalated in these years, starting with the youth revolt of December 2008, and a deep rupture in society clearly happened. The period under examination in this thesis, from April 2010 and up to the end of 2011, has been filled with popular protests, constituting what has been broadly termed a *“rebellious cycle”*. It is necessary to examine initially the context in which the current crisis has evolved in order to study afterwards the specific features of this rebellious cycle, and correlate them with the crisis in existing forms of political representation, alternative forms of political participation and the transformation of people's consciousness related to this participation and experience.

Therefore, I shall start this chapter by analyzing the broader socio-economic environment and the causes of the crisis, followed by an examination of the restructuring process of the last two decades in the next section. In the third section of this chapter I will include a brief presentation of the basic mechanisms and structures of political representation, the transformation of their dynamics prior to the crisis and the looming collapse of their legitimation. Finally, in the last section, special emphasis will be given to the transformation of the state and the hegemony processes, culminating in an overall crisis of hegemony of neoliberalism.

a. The socio-economic environment.

The rapid economic growth of the previous decade, sometimes referred to as the “second Greek miracle” (the first one being in the 1950-1960s’), has precipitously collapsed since the start of the global crisis. In 2008, the Greek economy went into recession (Bank of Greece 2009), while the first signs of an impending disaster became evident: in 2008, the sovereign debt was at 95.4% of GDP (Sakellariopoulos 2012), unemployment was growing, already reaching 28% for the youth, the poverty level had touched 21% (INE-GSEE 2010: 210-11), whilst wages were only 68% of real wages in the EU15 (despite labour productivity being 92% of that in the EU15, Ibid.: 220). The claim of “Greece being prepared to face the crisis” (Karamanlis 2008) immediately and calamitously collapsed. The December 2008 youth revolt was the harbinger of a broader social reaction to the socio-political situation. Less than a year later the ND government fell to be replaced by a social-democratic PASOK government elected under the banner of “there is money”, a catch-phrase which was understood as a promise to avoid austerity (Papandreou 2009). This government then led the country into entering the “Troika mechanism” for financial support on 23 April 2010⁴⁵.

The main pillars of the policies that followed consisted of the fiscal adjustment of the economy, the privatization of assets of the country and the deregulation of the labour market (Michopoulou 2012: 47). The letter of intent accompanying the entry in the mechanisms (3 May 2010), included three memoranda: the Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies, the Technical Memorandum of Understanding and the Memorandum of Understanding on Specific Economic Policy Conditionality. Their terms were fully binding for the Greek government, with no room for negotiation (IMF 2010). A stand-by loan agreement was to follow in 9 May 2010. The series of consecutive memoranda afterwards included measures consistent with the same

⁴⁵ The “Troika” consists of a decision group formed by the EC, the ECB and the IMF. This is part of a broader mechanism, the ESM. The ESM is an intergovernmental organization, established on 27 September 2012 as a permanent firewall for the eurozone. It operates under public international law and has been established after a special ESM intergovernmental treaty. Its field of action consists of providing instant access to financial assistance programs for member states of the EMU in financial difficulty, with a maximum lending capacity of €500 billion. It has replaced two earlier temporary EU funding programs: the EFSF and the EFSM. The EFSF was created as a temporary crisis resolution mechanism by the EMU states in June 2010, and Greece was one of the three first countries in which it intervened (along with Portugal and Ireland).

logic⁴⁶. As Sakellarpoulos notes (2014a: 72), “the target has been a massive reduction in living standards for the majority of the population, the retreat of the non-monopolist portions of capital, the shift of the, until recently, new petty-bourgeois strata (independent professions, small businesses, farmers) to wage labour, and an extreme version of state authoritarianism which will drastically enervate whatever potential of social resistance remains”.

Undoubtedly, memoranda strategies were linked to what has been called “the shock doctrine”. This originated with the Chicago school economist Milton Friedman, initially in relation to the case of Chile; predicting that the rapidity, amplitude and surprise of the imposition of economic changes would cause a psychological reaction in the mass of the population which would facilitate adjustment (Friedman and Friedman 1998: 592). Naomi Klein has shown in her analytical research how crises and disasters have been exploited to impose economic and political changes which would have been unacceptable and impossible for the population to handle in normal situations. Such a crisis atmosphere has often been the necessary pretext for overriding democratic processes and putting economic technocrats in charge of political governance (Klein 2007: 25). If confusion, disorientation and surprise are the three core elements of the shock doctrine (Ibid.: 616), the Greek case after entry into the “Troika mechanism” has been a showcase for all three. In parallel, the democratic processes of government have been bypassed and ministers authorized to proceed with any agreements in the spirit of the memoranda by simply informing parliament in retrospect. The majority of the measures taken have been enacted through legislative decrees rather than laws approved by parliament. The supervisory mechanisms which have been put in place by the memoranda included rigid and extremely detailed “conditionalities”, and procedures of constant evaluation of the “performance” in achieving the agreed “targets” (the so-called “reviews”). Only if these processes were conducted successfully were financial payments approved, to make debt repayment and public expenditure sustainable.

⁴⁶ From 2010 to 2014, 7 different packages of measures have been imposed, including the memorandums and their revisions, analytically reviewed in (Sakellarpoulos 2014a: 75-83).

The Greek crisis, in contrast to the dominant public discourse, has not resulted from purely “Greek specificities”, but is an expression of the global capitalist crisis. This global crisis has indeed been exacerbated in Greece, due to both the particular formation and development of Greek capitalism, and the entry into the EMU (Papakonstantinou 2013: 44)⁴⁷. The role of the EMU has been significant in this exacerbation of the crisis: Lapavitsas defining it as a “crisis of the eurozone” (Lapavitsas 2014d: 137)⁴⁸. According to Lapavitsas et al., the result of this crisis of financialization in the eurozone was, among other aspects, “a sovereign debt crisis, exacerbated by the structural weaknesses of monetary union” (Lapavitsas et al. 2012: 1). Financialization in the periphery, within the framework of the monetary union and with Germany ruling, with countries having entrenched current account deficits and a very particular accumulation and growth model, was combined with a general rise of indebtedness. The single monetary policy applied across the eurozone, the deficient function of the ECB⁴⁹ and the placement of fiscal policy under the tight constraints of the Stability and Growth Pact, made national competitiveness within the eurozone dependent on the conditions of work and the performance of labour markets (Ibid.: 2-3). The countries of the periphery and particularly Greece, have been extremely weak in this field, as will be examined below. The problem in improving competitiveness by applying pressure on the workers has been twofold: on the one hand, real wages and welfare states are severely worse in the periphery, and on the other hand, Germany has squeezed its own workers throughout this period, thus increasing its own competitiveness (Ibid.: 4).

Of course, this has been materialized in different frameworks, according to the social, economic and political environment of each country of the eurozone, and

⁴⁷ On the systemic character of the crisis in opposition to the argumentation on exclusively “Greek specificities”, see also (Varoufakis et al. 2011a: 50).

⁴⁸ Mainly due to the widening of the gap in competitiveness between the countries of the periphery and those of the core, and Germany in particular (see also Lapavitsas et al. 2012). As Lapavitsas underlines: “The eurozone was turned into a trap for the countries of the periphery: they have huge debts, they cannot compete the core, austerity is imposed to them and they suffer from long-term economic stagnation” (Lapavitsas 2012b: 28).

⁴⁹ The ECB was not allowed to acquire and manage state debt and was not opposed to financial speculation. It mainly focused on protecting financial interests and guaranteeing the process of financialization.

particularly of its periphery. The Greek crisis has actually been the crisis of a specific accumulation model chosen by the Greek ruling class (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 34). According to Lapavitsas, “this is an overall failure of the society and its political mechanisms”, while the crisis was manifested through the collapse of demand and the restriction of bank credits (Lapavitsas 2014a: 19). In the last instance, the problem is due to the weakness of the Greek economy to meet the requirements posited by the EMU, since it restricted the exercise of an autonomous monetary policy and transferred all adjustment weights in the production section (itself incapable of bearing them). Thus, competitiveness fell and austerity rose (Ibid.: 20). Moreover, the country was forced to resort to domestic and international borrowing, in order to cope with its huge external deficits (Lapavitsas 2012e: 144). Of course, the problem goes way back; a key point being the de-industrialization of the country that followed the entry in the EU, towards an increase of the services, which are characterized by low productivity levels and weak export activity (Lapavitsas 2014c: 106). However, the dominant narrative, especially at the start, attributed the crisis to over-indebtedness and over-consumption by the public sector, respectively affecting both the private sector and individual behaviour (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 33). This narrative aimed at inducing a sense of collective guilt in the society, in order to suppress mobilization and to create a framework for the imposition of memorandum policies.

As for over-indebtedness, which is an objective fact for the Greek state, the above narrative failed to focus on its actual reasons, which will be examined below. Over-consumption on the other hand is essentially a myth. The causes of the fiscal problems in Greece are not due to excessive public expenditure, but to limited public revenues (42.3% versus an average of 45.2% in EU15) (INE-GSEE n.d.), and to tax and contribution evasion (Varoufakis et al 2011a: 55-6; Argeitis et al. 2011: 17). This is directly related to the inequalities of the tax system⁵⁰. Rising budget deficits have been due 50% to tax evasion and interest payouts, and less than 10% to public expenditure increases (Mpogiopoulos 2011: 339). Repayments on pre-existing high interest loans

⁵⁰ Such inequalities affect the lowest incomes the most and include low taxation rates on capital.

have constituted a major cause of the excessive burden on public expenditure levels, compounded by incompetent management (Argeitis et al. 2011: 18). Private indebtedness remained low: 49.7% of GDP in 2010, while the EU14 average (excepting Luxemburg), was at 76.4%. At the same time, tax policy remained very inequitable; capital taxation is indeed very low (Varoufakis et al. 2011b: 9). Direct taxes are also low (20.6% versus 29.7% in the EU15 in 1995-2009), in contrast to indirect taxation; an indication of lack of progressiveness in the tax system (Argeitis et al. 2011: 14-6). This has actually been a political choice: prioritizing low taxation of high incomes. According to an OECD study in 2007, the real tax burden on profits was 15.9%, whilst for labour it was 35.1%. The tax rate on business profits was reduced from 45% (in 1990) to 20%. Moreover, in 2000, 52% of direct taxes came from individuals, whilst in 2008 the respective rate was 70% (Mpogiopoulos 2011: 352). In the first years of the twenty-first century, real taxation of labour was on line with the EU15 average, whilst that of big corporations was one third lower (INE-GSEE 2010: 93). However, austerity policies aimed exclusively at labour cost reduction, disproportionately affecting the working and petty-bourgeois classes.

The deepest roots of the Greek crisis are related to the specific way capitalism has developed in Greece. This includes (1) the liberalization of the banking system; (2) a constant tendency for increased profitability of capital; (3) growth rates bolstered by over-indebtedness rather than real investment; and (4) exploitation of cheap labour (INE-GSEE 2012: 156-57). Public debt is mainly due to: (1) benefits granted to big capital; (2) the cost of integration into the EU; (3) the consequences of market liberalization; (4) increased military expenditure; (5) the cost of the Olympic Games in 2004; and (6) policies of undermining and corruption of public enterprises. In addition, the increase in debt has been out of proportion to increases in GDP, leading to disproportionate amounts of GDP going to debt interest payments (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 61). Entry into the EMU was a political choice which, as it transpired, acted as a catalyst in the broader process culminating in the crisis. According to Sakellaropoulos and Sotiris (2014a: 4), “the introduction of a common currency without a common

authority and mechanisms of redistribution was intensifying regional imbalances and was at the same time to the benefit of 'European Centre' capital, and to the detriment of workers in both core and periphery countries." Such a strategy could be tolerated or actively embraced by the dominant class in times of relative growth, offering a vehicle for imposing capitalist restructuring. However, in times of crisis, the contradictions implicit in this strategy have been exacerbated (Ibid.). As mentioned, and in Lapavistas et al.'s terms (2010: 16), "external indebtedness reflects the biased integration of the periphery into the eurozone. Generalized pressure on wages has allowed the core to gain competitiveness, thus leading to rising indebtedness of the periphery to the core. Far from promoting convergence among member states, EMU has been a source of unrelenting pressure on workers that has resulted in systematic disparities between core and periphery."

The role and extent of corruption in the public sector merits further examination, since one of the dominant ideological doctrines on the causes of the crisis refers to a supposed "spendthrift public sector" and extended corruption. The myth of over-expenditure is difficult to reconcile with the fact that total public expenditure in Greece is one of the lowest in the EU in GDP rate terms. Primary budgetary expenditure has been further reduced from a base that was already lower than the average in the EU15 (44.6% versus 46.7% in 2001)⁵¹ (Varoufakis et al. 2011b: 5). There are of course long standing weaknesses in the public sector related on the one hand to income problems (ie. shortfall in revenue from direct taxation), and on the other hand, to expenditure problems (ie. restricted expenditure on health, education and social protection and excessive spending on defense and interest repayments coupled with lack of expenditure on investment)⁵². The fragile financial state of the public sector deteriorated

⁵¹ According to OECD data, in 2000 Greece had the narrowest public sector in terms of employment in general government and public corporations and in 2008 the second narrowest after Japan, out of those countries included (OECD 2011). In another relative OECD study (2003), the percentage of public servants from the whole workforce is 11.4% in 2003 (thus one of the four lowest in the EU, of which the average is 16.4%).

⁵² The share of social transfers in Greece represented for the period 1995-2009 35.4% of GDP, while in the EU15 the average was 42.1% (environment 0.5% against 0.7%, residence infrastructures 0.4% against 1%, health 4.6% against 6.4%, culture 0.4% against 1.1%, social protection 16.5% against 18.9%. At the same time, defense expenditure amounted to 2.9% against 1.6% and general public expenditure including interest payment 11% against 7.1% (Argeitis et al. 2011: 22).

after entry into the EMU. Entry created an increase in borrowing needs. This was exacerbated by access to cheaper money in parallel with greater dependence on foreign investors. The unstable architecture of the EMU both encouraged, and was vulnerable to the development of financial speculation. The membership of the common currency zone ruled out using currency depreciation as a means of restoring the balance. Meanwhile, differences in productivity rates continued to function as a mechanism for accumulating imbalances and undermining national economies (Argeitis et al. 2011: 61; Papakonstantinou 2013: 28-9.; Varoufakis et al. 2011a: 96-7; Sakellarpoulos 2014a: 31).

In addition, when examining corruption and clientelism, we have to bear in mind that such phenomena also exist in the most modern forms of government (Gizelis 2009: 14-5). Thus, these are not “distortions of capitalism”, since the law itself has been, by its nature, formulated to serve the interests of particular social groups against and unbeknown to the majority of citizens (Ibid.: 19). In the particular case of Greece, clientelism has been a structural element of its social formation. It has enabled the dominant class to form a pattern of social alliances with factions of the people, while for the lower strata it represented a strategy for survival and relative assurance. According to Kouvelakis, the development of clientelism is correlated to the relatively reduced autonomy of the state from the ruling class and to the absence of institutionalized forms of class compromise as a consequence of the scars left by the civil war and the ensuing lack of a welfare state (Kouvelakis 2010: 304). In terms of recruitment into the public sector, clientelism was at first an interpersonal relation, later transformed into a partisan strategy after PASOK's election in 1981 (Gizelis 2009: 63, referring to the two periods as “deputism” and “partisanism” respectively).

As for inequality and poverty, parameters which will be examined further in chapter III, these have been high even in periods of relative economic growth⁵³ (Antonopoulou

⁵³ Indeed, from 1996 to 2004, the economy was in growth, due to the conduct of the Olympic Games in Greece, the decline in real interest rates, the inflows from the EU, the real wage increases and the consequent rise in private consumption, the high profitability of productive enterprises and the increase of investments. This period was characterized by high equipment investments and an increase in the utilization rates of the productive capacities of the country, favouring the rise in labour productivity (+30% in this period) (Ioakeimoglou 2013: 29).

et al. 2011: 29). Economic growth has not only failed to reduce inequality and poverty, but such growth has been achieved by means based on inequality and poverty. In the 1990's and the 2000's, Greece ranked second in the world in terms of the increase of corporate profit per worker. Indicatively, the income gap between the richest 10% of Greek citizens and the poorest 10% has increased 6.5 times (Mpogiopoulos 2011: 310-11). In 1997, Greece was third globally in the OECD classification on inequalities, after Mexico and New Zealand (Kouvelakis 2008). At the same time, employers' profit margins were the second highest in the EU15 in 1995-2009 (Antonopoulou et al. 2011: 34). The share of GDP attributable to wages has fallen since 1980, declining to under 55% in the mid 2000's (Kouvelakis 2008). That type of growth was not accompanied by investments, by an increase of industrial production or by lower rates of prices variation: on the contrary, it boosted capitalist profits (Varoufakis et al. 2011a: 77). This growth was unsustainable, as proven, and resulted in "bubbles" in certain sectors of the economy (construction, real estate, consumption etc.) but also produced some very real effects for the ruling class and parts of its class alliances⁵⁴. At the same time, labour productivity constantly improved during this whole period: it increased by 21% in 2000-2007, with an average annual rate of 2.7% (Eustratoglou et al. 2011: 71-2). The household saving rate reduced from 14.1% in 1996 to 8.9% in 2004, leading to increase in lending and bank indebtedness⁵⁵ (Sakellaropoulos 2010: 325).

The labour market was characterized by relatively low participation rates in employment, high rates of unemployment, higher working hours than the European average⁵⁶ and workers remaining in the same job position for longer (OECD 2010; Antonopoulou et al. 2011: 29). Whilst Greece had the highest unemployment rates in the EMU⁵⁷, expenditure on unemployment benefits has been very low: 0.6% of GDP in

⁵⁴ These points will be further examined in chapter III.

⁵⁵ The level of household debt of families to the banks rose from 34.7% of GDP in 2005 to 50% of GDP in 2009 (Sakellaropoulos 2010: 325).

⁵⁶ According to a study by VPRC for the Athens Centre of Labour Unions in 2008, in the Attica region working hours were: in main employment: 41.33 hours; in the public sector 38.99 hours; in the private sector 41.97 hours. 53% reported working at weekends (often and sometimes) for an average of 9.63 hours (EKA/VPRC 2008).

⁵⁷ Karantinos' research has shown its spectacular rise of 70.8% between 1990 and 1998, meaning that the number of the registered unemployed rose from 280,171 people in 1990 to 478,535 in 1998 (2001: 140).

1980s' and 0.8% in 1990s' (in the EU15 rates were respectively 1.9% and 2.5%) (OECD 2003). The precarious nature of employment and high unemployment created pressures for greater state intervention. This intervention never took place, for political reasons. Actually, the state did act as a driving force, but its interventions promoted the reduction of labour costs and the shift of the balance of forces in favour of capital as well as the increase of the expenditure devoted to "law and order" and to the protection of private property (Palaiologos 2006: 115).

Finally, the position of the youth (as a cross-class social category with certain unifying features, Poulantzas 1972; Milios 1993: 121-22; Gaitanou 2011) needs a closer look, since radical rearrangements in the conditions of social integration affected the most active parts of society, particularly the youth. Aside from the political changes to be discussed later in this chapter, transformations at the economic level led to a structural mutation in the nature of labour (to be further examined in chapter III). This process largely concerned the youth, who had had to enter the labour market under egregious conditions. This strategy aimed at increasing profit margins, reducing social mobilization and creating divisions among workers. Youth employment is often used (along with the unemployed) as a laboratory for abolishing fundamental labour rights. Low wages are part of this process, allowing arbitrariness in recruitment, dismissal and setting working conditions, flexible, part-time and temporary work; and black labour. Unemployment has been explosive (38.5% in the 18-24 year old layer in July 2011 (Eurostat), climbing to 60% in the following years).

For a political system such as neoliberalism, which rose to popularity on promises of personal security and a guaranteed future under conditions of hard work, personal sacrifice and compliance with the dominant norms, the realization that today's youth will be the first post-war generation to enjoy a lower standard of living than its predecessor is deeply destabilizing. This scenario of austerity includes other socially regressive dimensions: The youth are dependent on their parents for longer and this dependence is heavier, while life rhythms are often unbearably stressful leading to a vicious cycle of constant accumulation of qualifications; failing in their turn to provide

protection from the increasing insecurity. This reality prefigures two possible outcomes: on the one hand, the emergence of the “deceived generation” (Bourdieu 1978), following dominant norms and forming expectations that will never be realized. This ends up in a situation in which the youth is oppressed and gets finally a life experienced devoid of any real motivation and meaning. On the other hand, the emergence of the “lost generation” (Davis 2008), refusing to accept this reality, but lacking any organizational resources for collective action and thus ending up in forms of social marginalization.

We have, thus, examined the roots of the Greek crisis, the socio-economic environment that has been formulated and the position of the youth as a social category with particular significance in the emergence of social protest. We will return in certain of these points when examining the social structure of the Greek society, in chapter III. In the meantime, we will investigate the basic points of the transformations that have occurred in the socio-political system during the last decades, in parallel to the implementation of modernization. This will permit our understanding of the political representations that prevailed, their stability, their weaknesses and contradictions, as correlated to the emergence of social protest in the period of the crisis.

b. Restructuring and modernization processes of the two last decades of the 20th century.

The emergence of the crisis in 2008 was a key development, and the memoranda policies constituted a severe break in the social, economic and political course of the country. However, studying the transformations the Greek social formation has undergone over the last thirty years highlights important aspects of the current crisis. In the last two decades of the 20th century, a radical rearrangement of the institutional framework of capitalism took place in Greece which aimed at revoking acquired rights, and also at disempowering every form of collective organization and bargaining. The route out of the 1970s' crisis involved a commitment to neoliberal management. This

orientation amounted to a continuous effort to shift the correlation of forces in favour of capital and against labour. As a result, austerity prevailed, in parallel with the dismantling of social security provisions, the reduction of pensions and the rise of taxation. Public sector enterprises were privatized (although this privatization project was not yet generalized), the financial system was liberalized, and new production systems were introduced. At the political level, repressive mechanisms and the hardening of state authority were promoted. At the same time, a transfer of power towards administrative functions was pursued, accompanied by the attribution of a political role to technocrats and the media, and the collusion of political parties with private capital (Sakellaropoulos and Sotiris 2004a: 12-3).

On the terrain of economic policy, this period saw the implementation of austerity policies and the privatization of state assets and enterprises. Important changes in the productive process and in labour relations were introduced. This process included an aggressive neoliberal management of the unemployment and social insurance systems which entailed crucial consequences in all aspects of the reproduction sphere: the education system was transformed to become responsive to market imperatives, whilst the management of public space was adapted to the generalized commodification of daily life. During the build-up to the EMU entry, neoliberal internationalization was intensified; the policies that were implemented were designed to facilitate the convergence with the EMU, under the overarching objective of increasing competitiveness. Concerning wages, the dominant imperative was to reduce labour costs in order to contain inflation and strengthen competitiveness; the result being a significant increase in the amount of overtime worked (Kouzis 2001: 270). Wage inequalities widened, and the difference between the minimum and maximum wage increased by 15% between 1994 and 1997, resulting in Greece ranking second in the EU in terms of wage inequality⁵⁸ (Kouzis 2001: 271). Actually a huge transfer of wealth from the popular strata to the dominant class took place during the period, especially after 1990 (as also shown by inequality indicators in the previous section). Thus, while

⁵⁸ The relationship between maximum and minimum wage was 6.7.

GDP rose by a factor of 5.5 from 1990 to 2007 (from 38 billion euros to 208 billion), the minimum wage only doubled (from 15 to 30 euros per day) while, in stark contrast, corporate profits rose by a factor of 28 (from 575 million to 16 billion) (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 39). Among the most developed EU countries, Greece has been in the last rankings in terms of gross wages per employee (Ioakeimoglou 2011: 15). In 2009, the real labour cost remained significantly lower than the most advanced European countries (approximately per 35% from the smaller countries of northern Europe, per 25% in comparison to France and Britain, and per 20% in comparison to Italy and Spain) (Ibid.: 17). At the same time, the margins of profit have been very high, mainly due to the increases in productivity of labour. Labour productivity in 1995-2004 has increased by 30%, (the second largest increase among the 18 most developed European countries, Ireland being the first in the ranking) (Ibid.: 13). Until before the period of the crisis, the margins of profit have reached 40%; being the highest average in the EU15, except for Ireland, during 1995-2009 (Ibid.: 69). Moreover, in 1995-2009, the prices of domestically produced goods and services rose cumulatively by about 30% compared to the EMU, and by 23% compared to the EU (Ibid.: 15). The deterioration in price competitiveness during the last fifteen years is due to the nominal exchange rate of the euro and not to changes in the average profit margin or in labour costs per unit of product. The euro currency revaluation made Greek products (goods and services) more expensive and undermined their competitiveness (Ibid.: 80-81).

In terms of employment relationships, labour rights were ignored, while the conflictual character of trade-unions was stifled. Labour legislation was routinely breached, and industrial accidents increased (reaching 20,000 recorded accidents per year) (Kouzis 2001: 271-77). Flexibility in the labour market also grew, both in illegal and legal employment, mainly after 1996⁵⁹ (Kouzis 2004: 658). The informal economy flourished and reached, according to the OECD, 30% of GDP, with 25% of the workforce being deprived of any insurance according to Labour Ministry data for 2000 (Kouzis 2001: 279). Illegal employment grew significantly, mainly through the

⁵⁹ Illegal flexibility refers either to black/fully undeclared work, or to violation of aspects of legal employment (Kouzis 2004: 650-51).

exploitation of immigrant workers, but also through the weakening of controls regarding compliance with the labour legislation (Karakioulafi 2005: 197-98). Unemployment benefits were minimal in amount and duration, putting Greece last in the EU in this respect (Ibid.: 282). Higher rates of non-voluntary part-time employment were recorded (Ibid.: 286). Working hours rose, whilst shift-work, and overtime in particular, expanded (Ibid.: 296-300). Radical transformations in labour relations had a fourfold target: (1) the degradation of full and stable employment and its replacement by flexible forms of employment with low wages and rights; (2) the dismantling of the pattern of collective bargaining and wage-setting; (3) imposing flexibility of working hours; and (4) the facilitation of redundancies (INE-GSEE 2012: 27).

Regarding the participation of the state, its role, rather than contracting, expanded but in the sense of acting as the guarantor of the long-term interests of the dominant class and the promoter of business profitability (Vergopoulos 1996: 326-28). If the state intervention in the 1980s' consisted indeed in a policy of crisis management (Gravaris 2004: 41), the period that followed was marked by a process of shifting from an interventionist state to a "strategic-state". This included a significant delegation of functions to the private sector (Sakellaropoulos and Sotiris 2004a: 101). Thus, in no sense can we talk of a restriction of the role of the state. As Harvey emphasizes (2005: 4-5), "This [the neoliberal process] by no case means that the state, based on that doctrine, does not play any role in developments. On the contrary, it is the state that formulates the institutional framework required by the markets, that will use all its mechanisms (ideological and repressive ones) in order to ensure their unhindered operation, and, moreover, will create new markets, wherever they do not exist, for example in areas such as provision or the environment". Welfare policies were vitiated and expenditure further reduced, while a kind of state policy-substitute took place: benefits were substituted by active policies of re-training and transferring the burden onto workers (Gravaris 2004: 50). In this context, the separation of powers was challenged and the role of the judicial mechanism enhanced and transformed into an means for normalizing the restructuring process and for implementing authoritarianism

(Sakellaropoulos and Sotiris 2004a: 51, 149-50). The transfer of power to supranational organizations contributed to consigning the social alliances and compromises developed in former periods to irrelevance. At the same time, the dominant concept of national sovereignty basically assumed the role of shielding the state apparatus and aiding in the destruction of the “enemy within” (i.e. the popular movements) (Ibid: 52-3).

In terms of political representation, the period following the mid-1980s' was characterized by the professionalization of politics and by popular passivity. The political system itself remained relatively, if only precariously, stable. This was largely the result of power alternating between two main parties (PASOK and ND), which, from the 1980's until the early 2000s' represented 85% of the electorate. The character of the systemic political parties became progressively transformed by the convergence of their political programs and the mutual development of strong links with private capital. According to Sakellaropoulos, neither could legitimately claim to represent the interests of the dominated classes, but both were involved in a form of intra-bourgeois negotiation (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 114). However, I would argue that this negotiation was never purely intra-bourgeois, in the sense that the popular interests were taken into account both by PASOK and ND but in a limited and non-coherent way, which is qualitatively different from the type of social compromise PASOK was able to implement in the immediate post-1981 years. There were certain concessions towards the popular strata, even partial and fragmentary, which explain the level of popular support enjoyed by both systemic parties before the Memoranda period. This support is essentially related to the economic boom that followed in the twenty years after the *Metapolitefsi*⁶⁰, which tied broad social layers to the dominant economic and political strategy, as will be further examined in the following chapter. This has produced the broad consensus based in the great social and political compromise of the Greek *Metapolitefsi* (consisting of the economic and political modernization under the aegis of Europeanization).

⁶⁰ “Metapolitefsi” is a Greek term, suggesting the period after the fall of the dictatorship in 1974, when the regime was changed into parliamentary democracy. This is term that has a particular connotation, resists any translation and it will be used as such hereafter in this thesis.

Overall, if the mass-party pattern represented a mechanism only indirectly reflecting class struggle and representing popular interests, both parties now had to fulfill a quite different role: hardening the political system and guaranteeing the stability of neoliberal policies. Unsurprisingly, the new course led to significant contradictions which became intrinsic to the nature of the parties themselves at the political, organizational and functional levels. The 1990s' saw the final demise of the model of the mass labour party, which, if it ever existed in Greece in the form of the idiosyncratic social-democracy of PASOK, did so with its own peculiarities. The consequences of this transformation were an important retreat of party activities and their almost total absorption in a succession of electoral battles, an increase of party expenditure and an orientation towards technocratic, managerial and communicative functions. This also reflected the rise of the role of political leaders, combined with restrictions in actual participation by ordinary members (see also Sakellarpoulos and Sotiris 2004b: 100-02).

According to Gravaris (2002: 110), a transition from a mass-party to a "network-party form" took place, in which internal functions were organized around a loose organizational tissue. At the same time membership participation was minimal and lacked serious obligations, while internal democracy was circumvented. At the ideological level, this transformation resulted in a general decline of ideological debates within and between parties. The class reference of parties was declining, and so was the Left-Right polarization. Political messages were neutered and "centrism" came to dominate as a political identity (Sakellarpoulos and Sotiris 2004b: 101). The impact of this new reality was reflected in the loss of respect for parties in the eyes of the electorate: according to an MRB poll in 1991, only 20.3% stated that parties responded positively or quite positively to the needs of the times ("fully": 4.1%; "largely": 16,1%); 35.3% stated that parties only partially responded; while 21.4% stated they responded minimally and 16.3% not at all (Loulis 1995: 336). The years that followed saw a further decline of respect for institutionalized parties (Sakellarpoulos and Sotiris 2004b: 104-06).

While respect for established political parties declined, the role of technocrats and of the media grew in the public sphere. The media functioned as “mechanisms of diffusion of the main ideological tendencies” (Sakellaropoulos and Sotiris 2004a: 58). Clientelism between citizens and the state prevailed, in the sense examined above (and often as the only viable survival strategy for the popular strata). This relative, but potentially fragile, political stabilization was also reinforced by an increased level of public sector employment, wider access to higher education and the existence of intermediary channels between citizens and political power (including local power and trade-unionism). In the same period, employers' organizations acquired an important role extending beyond political processes to cover the whole spectrum of economic, social and political life. They became a mouthpiece for employers' opinions on many issues concerning Greek society, contributing as key players in the Greek economy. This process peaked in the lead-up to the EMU entry. Employers participated both in institutional and non-institutional social dialogues (Aranitou 2004: 259-60; the author provides a detailed empirical examination of the role of employers' organizations in the period 1981-2002).

During this time, ideologies lauding concepts of technocracy and productivism, along with liberal individualism, became pervasive under the broad banner of modernization (Sakellaropoulos and Sotiris 2004a: 153). The elections of 1996, labeled as “the sofa elections” (Papadatos-Anagnostopoulos 2009: 23), were a clear example of the ongoing depoliticization and decline of popular interest in the campaign. The significance of this depoliticization was contradictory: it expressed on one hand, the transformation of political parties and of official politics, and on the other hand, their delegitimation as possible vehicles for a different way of exercising politics. This was evident only later, when politics came back to the foreground for the majority of the people (it was in 2008 when public passivity towards political issues began to fade; Konstantinidis and Tsakatika 2011: 72). However, in the period presently under discussion, the prevailing mood was oriented towards isolation and individualization. The dominant pattern of ideological and political positioning also shifted. As individuals

moved towards the political centre the feeling of political detachment rose, with cross-class voting becoming common and traditional opinions on issues like imperialism, socialism or the market economy undergoing realignments (Loulis 2001: 57-9). Finally, during this period, as Tsoukalas aptly notes (2013: 59), the “East-West distinction” of a former period⁶¹, was replaced by the “North-South” one, with important ideological and political implications⁶². This reality has induced a certain political stabilization, the positive engagement of broad social layers in the modernization project and Europeanism (combined with the consequences of the collapse of the USSR for the Left), and ultimately a strong consensus employed by the social system. These political and ideological transformations remained contradictory; however, their prevalence had specific material and ideological consequences, facilitated by the failure of the Left to articulate a coherent and persuasive alternative approach⁶³.

c. The end of the “*End of History*”.

“Contrary to the ascent of neoliberalism, which coincided with a long period of defeat for the working class and the political left, now we face an open crisis of neoliberalism as hegemonic ideology. References to the market and its inherent rationality do not have today the same appeal they had back in the early 1980s. Moreover, both the crisis of neoliberalism and the alienation of large strata, both middle class and working class, from the political scene, as the result of the consequences of the crisis,

⁶¹ The landmark of such an orientation was the famous statement by Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis in 1974: “We belong to the West”.

⁶² According to the author, the East-West distinction represents an expression of the geopolitical supremacy of the West against “the others”, while the new distinction represents a technocratic division, a conjunctural authoritarian mentality.

⁶³ At this point, it must be clarified that in Greece, due to historical reasons (as will be examined in the next chapter, basically the lack on any significant socialist or social-democratic force before 1974), the term “Left” is restricted to the left of social-democracy, unlike the rest of Europe. Therefore, in terms of partisan representations, when we refer to the Left in the context of this thesis, we include the KKE, the SYRIZA as well as the forces of the Anticapitalist Left (but not PASOK, which is of social-democratic origin).

mark a growing crisis of hegemony. This is an element of instability in the conjuncture.” (Sakellariopoulos and Sotiris 2014a: 12)

The political and economic landscape was in a process of deep transformation as the crisis in 2008 broke out. At the political level, the passivity of the previous period was shaken up by dramatic new developments. The social contract previously founded on expectations of social mobility, clientelism, the extensive increase in public sector jobs, and relatively free access to higher education were on the verge of collapse. The representative channels and institutions (including political parties, trade-unions and local political power) formerly functioning as links between ordinary citizens and the establishment suffered from increasing sclerosis. This process was intensified as they became increasingly bureaucratized and tied to the state acting as the servants of central political power. Their value and utility was damaged in the public eye, especially after a series of scandals involving their leaders and cadres. The elimination of the possibility of securing personal progress through individual negotiation (of any type) questioned the fundamental terms of the relationship between the political system and the citizenry. The collapse of social-democracy and its transformation towards neoliberal management intensified its inability to foster the collaboration of different social interests in an alternative political plan. Thus, nearly all the institutions were facing a deep crisis of legitimation, in parallel to a crisis of political representation.

The feeling of political deadlock was intensified by the authoritarian hardening of governance and the rigidity it displayed when faced with popular and social demands. The power structures had become unable to maintain the bonds between the citizens and the political system and to produce new fields of hegemony (both material and symbolic ones). Furthermore, public spaces open to political debate leading to socio-political changes seemed to be entirely missing. Any approach of politics was entirely restricted to the official forms and channels of exercising political activity. No legitimacy was granted to the popular factor, thus marginalizing the broader strata and excluding

every form of conflict outside the officially recognized repertoire. The social contract that had previously assured popular acceptance of the dominant forms of governance was broken, resulting in the increasing need of the government to rely on conservative and authoritarian measures. These measures were necessarily accompanied by a rising level of physical repression, surveillance and public discipline. The scope for any negotiation between the social groups and the state was shrinking, as the political system was massively distrusted and, in its turn, disinclined any negotiation. Citizens therefore felt they had minimal opportunities for representation and political expression. This feeling was intensified by the disdain and rigidity with which the state treated their demands⁶⁴.

It is quite telling that in the autumn 2008, immediately before the eruption of the December 2008 youth revolt, 77% of the participants in a Eurobarometer survey claimed not trusting the government (the respective rate in spring 2007 was 66%, while the respective rate in the EU at the time was 61%), with 68% not trusting the parliament, 86% the political parties and 56% the judicial system. The same survey displayed a strong sense of general dissatisfaction. Only 53% felt relatively satisfied with their daily life (65% in spring 2007 and an average of 76% in the EU), 66% predicted that their economic situation would worsen in the following year, and 64% predicted that the employment situation would worsen in the same period. Additionally, 64% stated that their purchasing power had declined over the past 5 years, while 63% faced difficulties in paying bills (Eurobarometer 2008). Similar, or worse, findings are to be found in dozens of surveys in the same period.

This perception of state institutions was part of the broader decline of respect for civic institutions. Local government structures progressively lost their autonomy and became more subordinate to central political power. They lost their powers in certain areas, while funding restrictions further complicated their ability for autonomous functioning. These changes were enshrined in legislation. The implementation of the Kallikratis project, voted in 2011, is a landmark in this process. It reduced the number

⁶⁴ On these points, see also (Gaitanou 2011a).

of municipalities by approximately two thirds, while simultaneously replacing the 57 prefectures by 13 regions. The project also increased the period of tenure for local and regional bodies from 4 to 5 years, broadly redistributed responsibilities and aimed at important cuts in costs. The number of Municipal bodies was drastically reduced (from 6,000 to 1,500), while decentralized managerial bodies directly appointed by the central government were established. The primary thrust of this ongoing restructuring was to marginalize local participation and to leave little potential for autonomous action, diminishing representativeness, and thus control by, and responsiveness to pressure by citizens. Therefore, from a field in which citizens felt they could be heard, particularly concerning issues of daily life (public space, education, transportation etc.) local government was transformed into another closed field of decision-making. However, the impact of such transformations was gradual and the representational function of local government structures was eroded at a slower pace than in the national political scene⁶⁵. This gap can be attributed to their alleged autonomy and to their more directly related to people's daily lives, impact in administration. However, in the local elections in autumn 2010, when the first mobilizations had already emerged, "the party system as created since 1977 was in its twilight. The two parties of the bipartisan system suffered a major blow and the electorate was either looking for a solution from the Left, or totally rejecting the electoral process, resorting to abstention or to spoiled/blank ballots. In any case, it became evident that deep transformations were under way. Whether they would be completed depended on the degree of exacerbation of the crisis and its consequences" (Sakellariopoulos 2014a: 148).

Similar processes were involved in the demotion and weakening of trade-unionism and the transformation of its role, something to be further examined in chapter III. As for political parties, their function was also transformed, both reflecting and aggravating the sense of political deadlock. The political programs of ND and PASOK, though originating from different political traditions, converged. This convergence ended up in

⁶⁵ In the 2010 local elections, out of the 713 municipalities, a candidate supported by PASOK was elected in 342 cases, and by ND in 260 cases. A KKE candidate was elected in 41 municipalities, while a candidate supported by SYRIZA was elected in 17 cases. Out of the 13 regions, a candidate supported by PASOK was elected in 8 regions, and by ND in 5 regions.

the pursuit of similar policies, further weakening the ability of the popular classes to put forward their demands in any meaningful political way (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 114). Thus, almost thirty-years of bipartisanship ended with parties simply alternating in power deprived of any real political project. Parties became increasingly identified with the state; their autonomy vis-a-vis its executive mechanism being eliminated. Thus governments simply expressed the interests of the dominant political bloc, with little concern for actual representation or electoral legitimacy, though such functions were usually not formally abolished (Kouvelakis 2011c). The parliament, as the legislative expression of people's will, lost its significance in relation to the executive power. It increasingly became a locus for imposing social consent, rather than a locus of meaningful decision-making (Agnoli 1972: 69; 73). Konstantinidis and Tsakatika argue that this introduced a sense of "anti-bipartisanship" and a general "anti-party" mood among the electorate. According to these authors, these feelings centred on the parties' ineffectiveness in dealing with people's real problems in conjunction with their convergence and the broader crisis of political representation (Konstantinidis and Tsakatika 2011: 69-70). Their thorough quantitative research has shown that immediately prior to the crisis, specific anti-party feelings, directed at the pillars of the bipartisan system, were stronger than indiscriminate ones, rejecting political representation in a generic way⁶⁶ (Ibid.: 92). Such feelings were not located in specific social groups but were diffused across the population (while being more intense in the youth) (Ibid.: 93). This argument about the youth is to be found in several pieces of research, with Teperoglou and Tsatsanis claiming that depoliticization processes in Greece have intense generational features (Teperoglou and Tsatsanis 2014: 48). These findings will be strongly confirmed in our fieldwork.

⁶⁶ Thus such feelings were directed at the two parties alternating in power, PASOK and ND, and not generally at all parties. This is a hypothesis strongly confirmed by our qualitative study conducting interviews with participants in the movements of 2010-2011. However, the deepening of the crisis and the weakness of other political parties (including the Left) in suggesting viable alternatives was to transform this tendency into a more general anti-party orientation after 2015, with important implications. This point will be later further examined.

Thus, the nature of this transformation in the party system was exacerbated during the crisis. Important realignments in the parliamentary groups of parties were to follow⁶⁷. According to Vernardakis, the parliamentary elections of 2007 already revealed a party and political system in transition, with bipartisanship put into question and giving way to a multi-polar party system (Vernardakis 2011: 26). The cleavage between acceptance and opposition to Memorandum policies was also decisive for the recomposition of the political and the party system. This had several parallel effects, such as transforming the internal operation of parties: the adoption of pro-memorandum policies influenced their function, including an important shrinkage of internal democracy (see also Spourdalakis 2013). This is even more evident in the parties which turned from opposing the memoranda in principle, to implementing them in practice (the prime example being SYRIZA gradually after its election in 2015). This is another resonant example of the structural transformation of political parties, from mass mechanisms reflecting class struggle and representation of popular interests to hard mechanisms for imposing neoliberal policies.

Furthermore, the judiciary, once thought as independent from political power, was gradually but relentlessly bent to the will of the latter, as were other institutions. A significant example is the Orthodox Church, which along with the decline of its ideological significance due to the broader transformations in Greek society, has been further denigrated after a series of scandals erupting in the 2000s. Such scandals, implicating both parties in power (PASOK and ND) indeed dominated the political debate at the time. The most important were: (1) the “Vatopedi affair” in 2008, in which a monastery in Mount Athos had indulged in a frenzy of entrepreneurial activity, illegally recognized as the owner of huge tracts of land by the state, while the abbot had personal relationships with several members of the government, including the State Minister of the time; (2) the abduction of immigrants from Pakistan by foreign secret services, who were then moved to a village and interrogated about their alleged implication in terrorism in 2005; (3) the investment of health insurance resources in

⁶⁷ Ending up with more than 60 deputies from the assembly elected in 2009 having left the party with which they were initially elected (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 150).

unsecured structured bonds by several, state appointed, management boards of insurance funds, with huge commissions and through an enterprise tied to ND in 2007; (4) the “Siemens affair”, in which party officials from both parties in power received huge commissions and secret funds to facilitate the granting of major public sector contracts to Siemens, in 2007. The succession of these scandals in such a relatively short period significantly contributed to further public disillusionment with the official political scene and resulted in the exacerbation of the crisis of political representation⁶⁸. Thus, political parties and other intermediary institutions playing a mediating role between society, the economy and state power no longer functioned adequately. According to Douzinas, this is simultaneously the strength and the Achilles' heel of neoliberalism (Douzinas 2011b: 139). This is even more valid since the success of any state-oriented strategy for social consent depends on the bonding between the objects of such a consent (thus of the population) and civic institutions. If in times of prosperity, the “parliamentarization” of conflict does not function properly to obtain the full consent of the population, then, in times of crisis, this failure puts in danger the social order as such (Agnoli 1972: 35).

In this context, the channels for integrating citizens into the dominant political strategy (mainly including employment in the public sector and access to higher education) became problematic. We have already examined the features of public sector employment and the impact of the restriction of public expenditure on job prospects. Regarding education, the employment situation of graduates slowly but inexorably worsened, to erode any guarantee of the prospect for a decent job. Despite this, secondary education was transformed into an examination-centred institution focused on preparing students for highly competitive university entrance exams. As Gouvias notes, “educational inequalities are linked to the structure of the labour market, the major factor influencing the potential aspirations of high school graduates

⁶⁸ In the December 2008 revolt of the youth, a giant banner had been hung across the façade of the building of the Town Hall in Agios Dimitrios, a district in Athens, which became one of the symbols of the revolt. The banner portrayed in the best way the delegitimation of the institutions described here. The slogan that written on it was: “We are sick of you! With the collusion between politicians, priests, the media, journalists, judges, top lawyers, cops, snitches and drug dealers, you have created an enormous pile of rubbish!”

regarding future professional prospects” (Gouvias 2010: 101). Possession of a university degree did not pave the way to better career prospects or a more respected social status. Gouvias' quantitative research on entrance flows in higher education has shown that in the period between 1993 and 2004, an impressive expansion of higher education was accompanied by reduced access for certain groups of the population, based on criteria of class, professional and educational classification, excluding an increasing proportion of individuals belonging to these groups from those higher education and professional prospects considered potentially as the most lucrative (Ibid.: 134-35). The establishment of tutorial schools (“crammers”) as a system to achieve entrance to tertiary education has intensified this class-based exclusion. Thus, access to those universities and faculties more likely to guarantee a better professional prospect became even more susceptible to class criteria (see also the study Karamesini in 2008: 220).

In the current crisis, this tendency has been amplified since even faculties formerly considered as being able to guarantee relatively good professional prospects, can no longer do so, while other faculties became no more than “mass receptors of the future unemployed” (Ibid.: 141). For Karamesini, the growth of unemployment was the main mechanism leading to the differentiation of the absorption of graduates, resulting in the deterioration of the terms and in greater delays in their access to employment (2008: 27-8). A recently published research on the job prospects of the NTUA graduates is also indicative, since NTUA is considered to be the premier Greek university, with a high proportion of its graduates supposedly occupying senior positions in the professional hierarchy. Nominal unemployment exceeds 10% in certain sectors⁶⁹. Long-term unemployment is massive, reaching 55.7% of the unemployed (22.6% in the previous decade, NTUA 2015: 30), while unemployment rates increased by 1% per year (Ibid.: 31). Income levels have dramatically declined (Ibid.: 38-9), while only 3.6% of the graduates work in the public sector, confirming that this path no longer constitutes a viable prospect (Ibid.: 35). “Flexible” working arrangements have also

⁶⁹ Respective rates were 2.2% in 1991-1995 graduates and 2.3% in 1996-2001 graduates.

radically increased (above 50% from 20% in the early 80s'), while various data reveal severe economic difficulties of engineering graduates (Ibid.: 14).

Furthermore, the transformations of the last few years have radically worsened the conditions of social integration for broader layers of society, while simultaneously creating the ground for new political alliances. This process has also resulted in certain social categories becoming much less visible, politically excluded, and non-existent as far as the official political scene is concerned. The most obvious social category of that type is the population of immigrant workers. Immigrant workers were actually never included in the political functioning of Greek society, despite the fact that they constitute a significant part of its social fabric (mostly originating from Eastern Europe and the Balkans). They have been deprived of basic rights; Greece does not grant Greek nationality (and a birth certificate) to children born in Greece unless their parents have the Greek nationality as well (INE-GSEE 2008: 36). For immigrants permanently living in Greece acquiring Greek nationality is a very difficult procedure: it requires proof of seven years of permanent residency in the country and a series of other requirements quite difficult to achieve (Papastergiou and Takou 2015: 23). Immigrants are excluded from basic individual social and political rights, including health-care, education, right to practice their religion etc), but they are also subjected to violent treatment and repression. The granting of asylum is so difficult⁷⁰ that the vast majority of immigrants remain without legal documents, in a limbo of underground life⁷¹. Furthermore, even legal immigrants have no political rights. They are not allowed to vote or participate in associations, (systemic) parties and in the majority of trade-unions (Kalyvas 2010: 358). Actually, as emphasized by Papastergiou and Takou (2015: 29) the immigration policy followed by the successive Greek governments made life for immigrants

⁷⁰ For many years, rates of asylum demands were very low with regard to the rest of the EU (1% when in the EU it was 17% for the period 2004-2009) because of the degree of difficulty of the procedure (including the lack of independent authorities, delays, the repression by the police even where people went to seek for asylum) (Papastergiou and Takou 2015: 30).

⁷¹ 481,505 residence permits were issued until the end of 2007, whilst the number of immigrants living in the country was far more than a million according to estimates (INE-GSEE 2008: 46). According to the Statistical Service data, in 2001, the number of foreigners living in Greece was 762,191 (this includes only legal residents), a number that during the crisis continually fell (Papastergiou and Takou 2015: 7-8). According to data from the same foundation, the immigrants without papers were 172,250-209,402, but, in other estimates, reached 350,000 in 2008 (Ibid.: 9).

unbearable, in order to deter them from entering the country⁷². Thus, social integration, nationality acquisition and elementary rights, which are of vital importance for immigrant workers, are far from guaranteed.

Immigrants are not the only social category affected by such political management. In reality, broader social groups that are part of the social majority affected by neoliberal policies, have been marginalized in the official political scene and its debates. All these groups provide a terrain favourable to unrest and “unconventional” forms of action. This is particularly evident in various segments of the youth. Serdedakis (2015: 363), argued back in 2005 that “there is a feeling of crisis, an accumulation of dissatisfaction, which, if it succeeds finding an expression, will resonate widely and be hard to control. The weakness of institutions acting as mediators, and of central institutions establishing channels of communication between individuals and groups, already contributes to an emerging dysfunctionality which takes the form of widespread forms of unconventional behaviour, especially in the youth”.

Finally, at the ideological level, the hegemony of neoliberalism of the previous years was challenged by several factors discussed previously, such as draconian reforms in education and labour relations, the disillusionment of broader social strata and the gap between aspirations and reality aggravated by a social environment overshadowed by the economic crisis, grinding austerity and the political deadlock. The market, ostensibly functioning as a social regulator, lost all credibility for the poorest groups as it became clear that they had to pay the social cost. The perspective of personal enrichment and consumerism faded from popular aspirations as it became an impossible dream for the majority of the population. Expectations for social mobility similarly collapsed, even among the majority of the middle classes. Besides, the social fabric itself was disintegrating, and the petty-bourgeois layers, a formerly vibrant terrain for participation in political and social life, started feeling the threat of social downgrading and proletarianization. Finally, the prevailing individualism was

⁷² This is evident in the policy pursued towards a rather different social group, the recent massive flux of refugees, or migrants strictly speaking, who do not aim at permanently staying in the country. The policies adopted by the EU, with the Dublin and Schengen agreements, as well as the activities of the European border police FRONTEX, have led to a further deterioration of the situation.

challenged, and public protest and collective mobilization re-appeared on the political scene. Europeanism as an ideological doctrine was also questioned, assuming, for the first time, negative connotations in the popular perception, or becoming a scapegoat, at least in part, for the Greek crisis. Even if this did not extend to full blown euroscepticism or a to broader rejection of EU membership and of the EMU, this European integration appeared as a “lesser evil”, a reality that society had to endure due to a lack of alternative choice (Voulgaris and Nikolakopoulos 2014: 15).

The weakness of the Left in articulating concrete alternatives and proposing a coherent political plan, became painfully evident during this period. The Left had formerly been at the forefront of mobilizations against the implementation of neoliberal measures, which sometimes succeeded in blocking or delaying some of them. As Mike Davis has claimed, “Portugal and Greece, having come closest to actual social revolutions in the 1970s, preserve the most hardcore left-wing cultures in Europe” (Davis 2011: 11). However, due to the specific historical background shaped by the experience of the defeat of the civil war⁷³ but also by the worldwide realignments that followed the collapse of the USSR, the radical Left seemed to have retreated from the ambition of actually claiming political power, limiting itself to defensive tactics. The rupture of 1989 is crucial in the process of dissolution of any consistent project of social transformation⁷⁴ (Mpelantis 2014: 137). Part of the radical Left concentrated its efforts on preserving its revolutionary purity and rescuing itself from integration into the dominant modernization project. Ironically, this retreat into an ideological ivory tower

⁷³ I mainly refer to the experience of the 1940-44 Resistance and to the civil war of 1946-49. The post-civil war state was based on the victory of the ruling class and the defeat of the Left. The dominant socio-political strategy included the setting-up of a repressive state, the reconstruction of the economy, the constitution of a broad social alliance on the basis of material compensation, an official ideology based on nationalism and religion, and cultural and spiritual decline (Sakellaropoulos 1998: 153-54; Tsoukalas 1987: 28-44). The memory of popular organization was repressed as was the idea that collective action could replace individual strategies (Tsoukalas 2013: 48). Politically, the post-war state was characterized by anti-communism in a broad sense, in which the “enemy within” was identified with the external one, thus way structuring the national identity (Charalampis 1985: 50). The state was staffed by former collaborators of the period of German occupation, members of the Resistance were marginalized and persecuted, while social groups who had grown rich through activities of “black market”, speculation, collaboration etc. came to dominate (Meynaud n.d. b: 18-9; Nikolakopoulos 2001:44). Persecution at a mass scale, exile and executions of communists and members of the Resistance were constitutive elements of the period.

⁷⁴ This rupture was combined with the fall of the USSR and a tactics of collaboration between the KKE and the systemic parties. KKE for the first time entered a coalition government with ND, and later in the same year, in an all-party government with ND and PASOK. This has triggered a left-wing breakup of KKE and it has generally been a landmark for the Left in whole.

neutralized any possibility of revolutionary effectiveness to the extent that tactics became disconnected from strategy. The ensuing isolation blocked any possibility of intervention directed to social transformation. The attitude of the KKE provides a clear case of this tendency. The KKE effectively isolated itself from the main mass mobilizations of the period under examination here and acted as a divisive and sectarian force, justifying its attitude with the argument that “people were not ready for broader political change”.

Another part of the Left constantly flirted with participation in state institutions and with the dominant bourgeois strategy. This approach functioned as an obstacle for any radically different initiative, and thus ended up being an integral part of the problem. This tendency can be seen in the case of SYRIZA, where certain factions were incorporated into the dominant bourgeois and memorandum strategy (eg. DHMAR), before the whole of the party finally capitulating in 2015 (with the exception of significant factions on the left-wing which left the party). The anti-capitalist Left, which is constituted in a relatively autonomous way, has not either been able to articulate a coherent distinctive alternative, while, at times, flirting with both of the tendencies discussed previously. Overall, the radical Left as a whole, with some significant exceptions, has proved incapable of proposing a political plan able to inspire and engage broader parts of society. Notwithstanding this decisive weakness, the radical Left maintained an active presence in the social and political mobilizations, which allowed it to have a considerable impact, and to mobilize tens of thousands of activists, bringing some success into blocking aspects of neoliberal strategies. These points on the Left will be further discussed in chapters IV-VI, under the light of the fieldwork I have conducted. In the following last section, I will investigate more concretely the authoritarian turn of the Greek state, as the last point to explain the latent crisis of hegemony when social mobilizations emerged.

d. The rise of the authoritarian state and the crisis of hegemony.

The process described above is one of a hardening of the state, of its function and its mechanisms. This has been a structural process transforming the very nature and functionality of the state. If, following Mpelantis and a whole tradition of political thought, we understand the state “as a mechanism which unifies and condenses bourgeois political power (without though exhausting at it), as a mechanism endowed with specific features aiming at dominating the popular classes and establishing a hegemony ensuring their subjection to the capitalist mode of production and their exclusion from political power, as a mechanism which, in the last instance, guarantees such an isolation” (Mpelantis 2014: 22) , then the form of the state plays a key role in the unfolding of both the dominant class strategy and the configuration taken by the social movement. In this section, we will focus on this transformation, according to which the state is shaped by the effort of the ruling class to eliminate elements of political representation, by the emergence of unaccountable centres of decision and by the hardening of repressive practices (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 11).

Repression, in its broader sense, has been a constitutive element of the state in post-civil war Greece⁷⁵. However, the “Metapolitefsi” has signaled a rupture in this process. This period brought a democratization of the state and of public life, which was extended in the early years of PASOK rule. In the mid-1980s, Greece had among the least repressive frameworks in Europe⁷⁶, the most friendly to trade-unionism labour laws, the most participatory university system and an overall left-wing ideological atmosphere. These elements are due to concrete socio-political particularities and will be further examined in the next chapter, combined with the investigation of the Greek social structure. Gradually after the 1990s', physical repression became predominant,

⁷⁵ Characteristically, on top of the post-civil war state of violence noted in footnote 73, cadres of the army who participated in the 1967-1974 dictatorship have been incorporated into the state apparatus after its fall, the police was organized in paramilitary structures, while legal forms of violent repression have been implemented, both by the first right-wing government after the dictatorship, and by the PASOK governments afterwards (Charalampis 1985: 348-51).

⁷⁶ In the early Metapolitefsi years, repressive legislative restrictions were imposed after moments of civil unrest, when there was also an unstable pattern of political representation and party system, in parallel with increasing radicalism (Vernardakis and Mavris 1986; Georgakopoulos and Seriatos n.d.: 12; Mpelantis 2004: 164). After the 1980s', this framework was to some extent altered and the management of social life was democratized. Repressive operations were targeted mainly against the most radical layers of the society (eg. “operation Areti” against the radical youth etc.)

with police violence and impunity constituting its characteristic but not unique element⁷⁷. Changes in the legal system and the top-down control of the judiciary and of administrative power have also been part of this strategy. A series of new laws aimed at restricting the right to protest and the intensifying surveillance. Repression was militarized and new Special Units were created within the police forces largely devoted to the repression of collective action. Paramilitary mechanisms and fascist groups have acted in direct or indirect collusion with the state and the police. Political trials, following the arrest of the urban guerrilla group 17N, were used as the Trojan horse to restrict – or even abolish – fundamental individual and political rights, and to persecute systematically social movement activists, while social and political protest was treated as the “enemy within”. Physical repression and massive use of tear gas became routine practices directed against residents of “undisciplined areas”, the mobilized workers, immigrants or the youth. These policies aimed directly at fighting the emergence of social movements and mobilizations. Thus, the police has been conceived by the mass of the people as a repressive mechanism imposing social order rather than a mechanism of protecting citizens; a point to be made evident later in this thesis, in the examination of the outcomes of my field research.

Agnoli had described such transformations in his emphasis on the emergence of regressive tendencies moving towards an authoritarian state. This process reflected broader disciplinary patterns characterizing western societies, and was related to the mechanisms of parliamentary democracy themselves (Agnoli 1972: 10). In his view, this tendency was inherent in the structural crisis of capitalism and in the effort of the ruling class to resolve the crisis in its own benefit. The coming of the crisis facilitates the interrelation between the tendency of the state to extend its jurisdiction and power, and the desire for a complementary “police-state”, securing the established social order, the will of politicians for power and the need for a forcible guarantee of existing privileges (Agnoli 1972: 61). This is a tendency we detect in the management of the

⁷⁷ Indicatively, in the 2003-2007 period, only one out of 238 police officers accused for practicing violence was fired, no one was convicted, and only one out of 99 officers having used their firearms (leading to 12 deaths and 27 injuries) was convicted and dismissed (Sakellaropoulos 2012).

current crisis. As Mpelantis, following Poulantzas' analysis, underlines, the structural crisis is seen, paradoxically, as a process of simultaneous weakening and enhancing of the power of the dominant class, pushing a transformation of the state along the lines of authoritarian statism (Mpelantis 2014: 118). Poulantzas' concept of authoritarian statism describes a process in which the established alliance of power no longer refers to different sections of capital supported by classes-bearers and the suborned leaders of the dominated classes (Poulantzas 1978). Social alliances are radically rearranged and non-competitive capital is eliminated, leading even to the extinction of certain fractions of capital. State management aims at curbing social resistance, but is no longer based on a positive project: it essentially relies on the management of the "minimal expectations" of the affected social majority (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 111). The need for establishing this authoritarian turn is associated with a threat to the normal functioning of the state, and thus is directly turned against demands and protests coming from the most exploited and oppressed factions of the population. In times of crisis and of intensification of the neoliberal management, state functions do not aim primarily at ensuring consensus and the political integration of broad social strata, but at suppressing practices of resistance and protest and imposing "normality". The questioning of neoliberal management is assimilated to the action of the "enemies of the interest of society". This approach paves the way for the repression and the marginalization of the more radical sectors of the social movement, those advocating social change (Mpelantis 2004: 64, 119).

After the implementation of the memoranda strategy, this tendency towards "post-democratic" and "post-hegemonic" conditions has exacerbated. A Gramscian "Caesarism without a Caesar" prevailed in the political system (Gramsci 1971: 220): the political scene tends to become autonomous from certain social representations and parliamentary rules, and the political system functions as if social strife did not exist. Electoral legitimation of such tendencies is bypassed or diluted without necessarily being abolished (Sotiris 2011: 161). These transformations refer to the multiple levels already examined to some degree: the hardening of the party system,

the shift of the state towards functions of a “strategic-state” promoting neoliberal restructurings, the relation of the government to supranational organizations, and the hardening of repression (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 114-15). This temporal suspension of the constitutional order has not led to a proper break in the regime of the state form, signaling a more organic and irreversible transformation. However, the assimilation of such a temporal suspension inevitably produces structural consequences in the long-term.

Furthermore, this whole process of authoritarianism is linked to a strategy of what has been called, following Foucault’s analysis of modern power, the “biopolitical management of the population”. “Biopower” is defined as the exercise of power over every aspect of life and aims at disciplining the individual and the social body through an integral control of all the processes of its “life”. It extends to institutions and targets specific social groups (Douzinas 2011b: 138). This power dynamic constitutes actually an extra-economic form of discipline coming to the forefront. This perspective of biopolitics can be understood as being still class-based, in opposition to an a-historical and timeless view⁷⁸ (Marias n.d.). Foucault himself emphasizes: “the two processes – the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital – cannot be separated; it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them; conversely, the techniques that made the cumulative multiplicity of men useful accelerated the accumulation of capital” (Foucault 1995: 221).

Thus, the target is the intensification of exploitation, and not an ostensible exclusion seen as independent from such an exploitation. Marginalization (in lieu of “exclusion”) of broad social strata aims at deepening the exploitation of all the oppressed, both the “included” and the “excluded” ones, producing at the same time another cleavage between the two. Moreover, it develops a sense of moral culpability of those considered as “included”, which accompanies the invisibility of those who are “excluded” (Kouvelakis 2007: 49). The management of “universal guilt syndromes” is

⁷⁸ Such are certain approaches on the “state of exception”, which seem unable to perceive the totality of the process. (eg. Agamben 2005; for a fair criticism, see Sotiris 2012a).

one of the fundamental tactics of biopolitical discipline, producing the identity of the “innocent guilty” (Douzinas 2011a: 84-5). This is directly reflected in the way public discourse on the debt and its causes has developed in Greece over the last years: one of the main slogans constantly reproduced by the ruling class during the first years of the crisis has been that “we have spent the money all together”, aiming at spreading precisely this feeling of collective guilt.

An important aspect of this whole process refers to the direct intervention performed by supranational organizations and by the Troika, in the political and economic functions of the state. It is no exaggeration to say that the presence of the Troika has been fully internalized by the Greek state. Many examples confirm this phenomenon: (1) the creation of the Task Force, staffed by experts coming from other EU countries, aimed at supervising the function of the public sector and having extended jurisdiction; (2) the direct intervention in four major ministries by the respective German ones; (3) the strong presence of the lenders within the TAIPED, the fund managing the privatization and auction of the country's public assets; (4) the installation of a committee of the lenders within the managing board of Greek banks; and (5) the creation, by the second memorandum, of a special fund for all public revenue, controlled by the lenders (Sakellariopoulos 2014a: 127-29).

Such an intervention is so widespread that it constitutes a qualitative turning point, leading to the transformation of the country into what has been called a “debt colony”. Before easily adopting such a definition, certain elements must be borne in mind: firstly, the question of national sovereignty must be revised in a relational way, examining the overall articulation of all countries in the imperialist chain⁷⁹. Secondly, speaking of a colony amounts to recognizing the existence of concrete and articulated colonial empires; and such entities are not to be found in the current configuration of the international capitalist system (Sakellariopoulos 2014a: 131). Intergovernmental organizations are the ones performing this role. Thirdly, the concept of the colony

⁷⁹ Therefore, the dominant issue is not if a state loses certain elements of national domination, but if this actually corresponds to a qualitative turn, and to what extent. In any case, such a turn seems to have indeed been effected nowadays in Greece (Sakellariopoulos 2014a: 130).

usually comprises exclusive relations of dependence, neglecting the fact that, as in the Greek case, the domestic dominant bloc of power (or, at least, the most important part of it) has emphatically tied its actual interests to those of the EU, and is not simply a vassal independent of these very interests⁸⁰. In the Greek case, governance is therefore conducted by an international alliance (and not by a single country-Empire). National governments are the ones entrusted with the responsibility of governance (and not directly the international organizations). At the same time, no efforts are made towards extra-capitalist extraction of wealth going directly to a metropolis, and foreign intervention is still extensive, but centred around economic functions (Sakellariopoulos 2014a: 132-3). The main aspect of this strategy is the overwhelming subjection of its popular classes into the dominant political and economic strategy. This has the distinctive characteristic of including the deconstructing of aspects of the sovereignty of the Greek state. This is strongly tied to the architecture of the eurozone and the effects of the Stability and Growth Pact. As Lapavistas et al. underline, “The Stability and Growth Pact represents a loss of sovereignty for eurozone states. However, not all states within the eurozone were created equal. The loss of sovereignty has been more severe for peripheral states” (Lapavistas et al. 2012: 35). This is the reason why the national question has re-emerged in the forefront of mobilizations, especially during the movement of the squares. National symbols were employed by the protesters and the national dimension was articulated to the “anti-austerity” and the “pro-democracy” discourse, as we will examine in chapter IV.

The reality described here culminates with the deeper hegemonic instability which is inherent to neoliberalism, leading, under certain conjunctural conditions, to a crisis of hegemony, an organic crisis (Gramsci 1971: 210). Neoliberalism is no longer able to

⁸⁰ As Sakellariopoulos puts it, it is “an unbalanced alliance having as a cost the involvement in the function of the Greek state of foreign institutional factors *as well*, but having as a benefit, on the one hand the transfer of an important mass of surplus value towards the dominant monopoly capital, and on the other hand, the clearance of non-competitive capitals” (Sakellariopoulos 2014a: 127). Of course, colonial situations always go together with local “compradore” elites collaborating, actively participating in the exploitation of the “natives” and linking deeply their interest to colonial rule. This usually refers to particular sections of the ruling class. However, in the Greek case the elite strategy is much more unified, insisting on the abidance of the country in the European project, and its internal contradictions are less acute. It is indicative that later (in 2015), when the question of exiting the EMU was posited realistically as a potential for the country, the dominant bloc coalesced almost automatically against it in various ways.

produce a proper form of hegemony, based on a project which (partly) integrates the interest and the specific role of the subaltern classes: it is rather based on the passivity of “civil society”, tied to its inability to formulate alternatives, and is accompanied by the perspective of constantly deteriorating living conditions for the population. At this point, it should be noted that hegemony does not simply refer to extracting consent as opposed to coercion, nor to the ideological or cultural dimensions of social life as opposed to economic or political ones. The concept of hegemony refers to the complexity of the forms in which power is exercised, when a social class may be a dominant but also a leading force in society. The economic element is crucial here: in the Gramscian concept of hegemony, the latter is never simply political, but must be based on a strategy for the economy: “Though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity” (Gramsci 1971: 161). It is in the framework of this crisis of hegemony that the movements of 2010-2011 under examination in this thesis emerge, develop and contribute on the transformation of both praxis and consciousness of the Greek people.

To conclude, in this chapter I have overviewed the political and ideological landscape in which the society has been transformed in the last decades and its destabilization. This investigation will permit our comprehension of basic political tendencies, which explain both the relative political stability of the time and the contradictions that have led to the specific forms of social mobilization, to be explored in the next chapters. The collapse of the strong ideological hegemony of the version of neoliberalism that prevailed in the period prior to the crisis has been decisive in this emergence; and so has the impact of the dominant, though controversial, political and ideological tendencies of the Greek society. During the crisis, the political re-emerged in the forefront, combined with the weakness of the official political scene to fill this role, the collapse of the dominant channels for integrating citizens into the dominant political strategy and the delegitimation of the main political and state institutions. This has led to the deeper need of the participants in the movements of exploring alternative ways

of conceiving the political. However, before examining the specific characteristics of these movements, I will examine the class structure of Greek society, and the main features of the labour and trade-union movements in Greece before the period of the crisis. This study is necessary for the deepest comprehension of the class origin of the conflicts emerging, and will be conducted in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III: THE CLASS STRUCTURE OF GREEK SOCIETY

In the previous chapters I established the grounds for the theoretical framework of my thesis, and described the specific socio-economic and political environment in which the social movements under examination emerged. I also argued in favour of a class analysis, avoiding both replicating mechanistic approaches vaguely reproducing abstract ideological tenets, and premature farewells to concepts of class, including the working class. Such approaches tend to neglect two necessities: firstly, dealing with each concrete case in its particularity, and secondly, identifying the indisputable changes in labour over time. Alberto Toscano elaborated a framework based on a dialectical approach, which takes into account the transformations in labour, and puts emphasis on questions of space and time, disciplinary processes, racial and gender discriminations (Toscano 2012). This is an approach I intend to adopt when studying the class structure in Greece. An in-depth analysis of the Greek class structure is indeed necessary if the organizational structures of the labour and social movements in Greece are to be effectively approached and fully understood. However, this task has often suffered from partial and superficial treatments, facilely reiterating simplicities and mechanistic replications from other social formations.

Therefore, in the first section of this chapter, I will first present certain methodological issues and theoretical foundations of class theory and subsequently employ them in an analysis of Greek class structure. Then, I intend to explore the particularities of this structure, arguing that these differentiate it from the other developed capitalist countries of Europe. In the third section, I will present the evolution of this class structure up until the crisis, and examine how policies in the context of the crisis have exacerbated class polarization and reformulated the social landscape. This evolution has changed the class structure to a pattern closer to the one that dominates in other European countries. In the following section, I will analyze the specificities and qualitative features of the working class in Greece, moving beyond the issue of its

relative weight, in order to provide a picture of its forms and its internal composition. The fifth section of the current chapter will examine in more depth the forms and features of the labour and social movement in Greece in relation to the class structure putting emphasis on its historical and political trajectory. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I will examine the specifics of the emergence of the social movement in Greece in broader terms. In this examination, I will take into account the difficulties that the traditional labour and trade-union movement has faced, the emergence of new structures beyond traditional trade-unionism, and the fact that the social movement is not restricted to workplaces (emphasizing on the spatial dimension of mobilization).

a. Introductory elements: Methodological issues and class theory.

Before starting an analysis of the features of the class structure in the Greek social formation, I think it necessary to discuss certain methodological issues on class theory having a bearing on my particular field of research and the Greek situation. In terms of capitalist development, Greece is a country of average capitalist growth. The central issue in the related debate on its class structure is located in the weight of the “traditional petty bourgeoisie” and the slow and limited growth of wage labour, which means that the expansion of capitalist relations in Greece took forms which included the reproduction of simple commodity production and small-scale capitalism. This evolution is evidently linked to the place of Greece in the global chain of “combined and uneven development” of capitalism. The pattern that has dominated makes a case for positioning Greece in the “periphery” of European capitalism, alongside other countries of the European South. Petty bourgeois strata development has occurred not to the detriment of the expansion of capitalism, but in parallel with it, forming, to some degree, one of the triggers of that very development. As Lytras underlines (1993: 158): “The peculiarity of the Greek paradigm of the domination by capitalist relationships is related to the lack of essential and remarkable pro-capitalist remnants. Even more, those to

whom such classifications are most eminently attributed, namely small enterprises in industry and commerce and small rural properties (farms), are the ones that emerge and grow big exactly during this very period of capitalist domination” - or at least during its first period, in my view. Industrial development is associated with the formation of the small shop commercial sector based on low capital assets, small individual-family capital and restricted production. According to Moschonas: “The process of expanded capital reproduction, which grew stronger in Greece in the inter-war period and became dominant in the post-war period, under the effect of foreign capital as well, has mainly evolved not against, but in parallel to the process of simple reproduction, meaning the conservation and development of small-commodity production” (1986: 32; other researchers endorse similar arguments, eg Mavris 1984: 2-3, Lytras 1993: 158). At the same time, there is a tendency for small enterprises to be involved in activities either complementary to big capital or unprofitable to it. This restricts them to a satellite role, directly or indirectly dependent on and manipulated by big capital. Thus, while big capital dominates, small enterprises still survive (Lytras 1993: 155-56).

The dominance of the above pattern goes back to the formation of the Greek state in the 19th century. The main explanation for this dominance is economic, and is related to the prevalence of the particular model of capital accumulation and penetration of capitalist relations (as examined in chapter II). The political turbulence of the 20th century, and specifically the construction of the post-civil war state based on authoritarianism but in need of building a social basis, have intensified this pattern. In the relevant literature, in contrast, the development of capitalism is often portrayed as linked with the inevitable decline and dissolution of the middle socio-economic strata itself. Therefore, we can detect three dominant approaches for the interpretation of the specific case of Greece. The first approach identifies the broad existence of petty-bourgeois strata with the preservation of pre-capitalist relations, and attributes it to the underdevelopment of capitalism in Greece (eg. Mouzelis 1978). Traditional Marxist approaches (Papadopoulos 1987; Kotzias 1979; Sarlis 1987; Kappos 1987; KME 2000) tend to dismiss any idea of Greece forming a specific case; reflecting an anxiety to

establish the quantitative hegemony of the working class (Lytras 1993: 130). Finally, post-modern approaches tend to generalize by finding a supposed tendency of the petty-bourgeois strata to dominate, until they become overwhelming prevalent. This leads them to an overall depreciation of any class reference (Rifkin 1995; but also Tsoukalas 1987, as examined in the next section).

All these approaches share a very narrow definition of the working class, using the criteria of surplus value production and productive labour as the foundation for that definition, and distinguishing between participation in the realization of surplus value and participation to its production (Mavris 1983). In our view, class definitions must avoid the trap of any classification based on a static process. Classes are not to be interpreted as categories existing separately and distinct from class struggle and simply based on an empirical sociology (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 193; Palaiologos 2006: 352). The nature of the historical evolution of class struggle determines the very features of the classes involved. As Fytrou (2015: 10) underlines, “(1) social classes do exist, (2) they are defined in a complex way based on the historical, social and political stakes and the respective conflicts, (3) they change because of these conflicts”. The primary criterion for class identification is the phenomenon of exploitation (defining the terrain of class antagonism), and secondarily, the relations of domination and their articulation into the social structure (Sakellaropoulos 2014b: 3; 2014: 195)⁸¹. In the present thesis, Lenin's criteria for defining classes will be adopted as a starting (though not exhaustive) point: “Classes are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation (in most cases fixed and formulated in law) to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and, consequently, by the dimensions of the share of social wealth of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it. Classes are groups of people one of which can appropriate the labour of another owing to the different places they occupy in a definite system of social economy.” (Lenin 1919: 421).

Certain factors must be further borne in mind when approaching concepts of social

⁸¹ Therefore, our approach is evidently in contrast to Therborn's dismissal of the concept of (class) interest as a driving force for human behaviour (Therborn 1980).

classes: (1) their relationality (identification to a class does not mean the insertion into a scalable social hierarchy but the correlation of the relationship of this specific social class to the other ones); (2) the conflictual nature of the relationship between classes (given their objectively different material interests); and (3) the objective substance of classes (belonging to a class is related to the concrete social relationships it embodies) (see Callinicos 1987).

Because of the Marxian distinction between productive labour in the general sense (production of use-values) and productive labour as viewed from a capitalist perspective (labour exchanged with capital rather than income and which returns profit to the capitalist) (Marx 1981: 150; Marx 1978: 194, 524)⁸², certain researchers have defined classes according to whether subjects produce surplus value in the narrow sense for capital (e.g. Poulantzas 2008). This definition is not adopted here, nor does it reflect Marxian analysis as we perceive it⁸³. In order to include a worker in the working class, we must examine whether she is productive from the point of view of capitalist production. This is evidently the case if she produces surplus value. This is also the case if she does not produce surplus value but is subjected to surplus non-paid work which contributes to an increase of the employer's capital, returns profit to the employer and facilitates the realization of surplus value (Kotzias 1979: 46; Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 210). Thus, a worker can be considered as belonging to the working class if she is an exploited wage labourer, without necessarily working in a sector of surplus value production. According to Sakellaropoulos, "the form of the

⁸² "Two conclusions necessarily follow from Marx's definitions: 1) every labour which a capitalist buys with his variable capital in order to draw from it a surplus value, is productive labour, independently of whether or not this labour is objectified in material objects, and whether or not this labour is objectively necessary or useful for the process of social production... 2) Every labour which the capitalist does not buy with his variable capital is not productive from the point of view of the capitalist economy, even though this labour might be objectively useful and might be objectified in material consumer goods which satisfy human subsistence needs. At first glance, these two conclusions are paradoxical and contradictory to the conventional understanding of productive labour. However, they follow logically from Marx's definition. And Marx applies it boldly" (Rubin 2008: 260).

⁸³ Poulantzas' concept of class includes two aspects that have raised controversies: the first is the inclusion of a criterion of "productive" labour, which he actually assimilates to manual labour, and will be contested below. The second is that he gives equal weight to ideological and political determinations (eg. assuming functions of supervision) and to economic ones (that is to exploitation). Wright (1978) in response, gives central importance to exploitation but elaborates the notion of "contradictory class location" to address the issue of a position in the social division of labour which combines subjection to exploitation and secondary functions of domination of the workforce. For a systematic critique of Poulantzas' thesis from a Marxian perspective that reflects our views, see (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 201-20) and (Mpelantis 2014: 177-83).

working class is firmly linked to both the production and the circulation of capital. This claim forces us to examine how capital transformation consists of one single process. This means that a distinction between the three spheres of pure capitalist production (industry, commerce, services), as a criterion for insertion into a social class, is mistaken” (Sakellaropoulos 2014b: 2-3; also Kotzias 1979: 49). The production, distribution and circulation phases of capital are thus considered as different instances of a single process, aimed at the realization of surplus value. This comes in contrast to theories of the so-called “tertiarization” which tend to posit the disappearance of the working class and its replacement by the “middle strata”, neglecting thus the fact that services can also be capitalist commodities (Sakellaropoulos and Sotiris 2004a: 106).

In my perspective (and contrary to the Poulantzian perspective), intellectual, rather than just manual workers, can also be categorized as working class: “each intellectual who works in the sphere of either material or intellectual production or in the capital circulation sphere belongs in the working class for as long as she is productive ‘in the capitalist production sense’, meaning for as long as she contributes in the valorization of the capital and if she does not have a managerial role” (Kotzias 1979: 60). Alongside the development of capitalism, two interrelated tendencies have developed on intellectual labour: on the one hand, intellectual labour has entered the economic sphere and is not simply confined to the superstructure, and on the other hand, it is exercised by members of the working class as well, and not simply by members of the ruling class (Ibid.: 119). The antithesis between manual and intellectual work is integrally subsumed into the capital and is no longer a form of expression of the dominant class antithesis (Ibid.: 132). Besides, as Balibar claims, the concepts of manual and intellectual labour do not have a stable or “natural” content: “labour in general, as a social and collective activity, is at the same time ‘manual’ and ‘intellectual’” (Balibar 2014: 140). Labour presupposes the knowledge of the object and of the conditions of labour. Thus, the mutual field between these two functions of social labour is in a state of constant transformation and can be defined only in retrospective, rather than in competition (Ibid.: 141-42). To conclude at this point, the limits of the

working class tend to be extended in conjunction with, and in a sense, complementary to, capitalist development. Expansion of corporate activities leads to a greater submission of labour to capital, thus to an increase in the size of the working class (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 219). This is why, as Bensaid underlines, de-industrialization in the West has not engendered the disappearance of the proletariat (2009: 56).

This whole analysis should not lead to the idea that there are only two classes in capitalism: ostensibly the working class and the bourgeois class. Such a conclusion could be made only if analyzing the capitalist mode of production at a level of elevated abstraction. At the concrete level of actual societies and social formations there are more than two classes, not just because different modes of production exist in parallel in the historical evolution of each formation, but also because certain class functions of the dominant class are assigned to social groups who are not members of the dominant class (Milios 2002: 64). These groups neither realize nor extract surplus value, but they do perform specific social functions and are reproduced by receiving the financial compensation corresponding to the overwork of other workers, because of being necessary for the reproduction of existing social relations (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 200). Hence the existence of the petty-bourgeois class, divided into two categories, old and new⁸⁴. Craft owners, small family business proprietors and small commercial business owners belong in the “old” or “traditional” petty-bourgeois class. Such businesses only employ a few wage labourers, owners extract small amounts of surplus value, no expanded reproduction of capital is effected and living labour dominates over dead labour (Ibid.: 227-8).

The new petty-bourgeois class is differentiated from the old one by not possessing any means of production, not benefiting from the extraction of surplus-value, and

⁸⁴ We choose this term instead of the term “middle class”, which would have the sense of an intermediate step. We also maintain the division of the petty-bourgeoisie into two sub-categories, though keeping a certain hesitancy. Indeed, the existence and rapid rise of a strata of wage-earners that are not part of the working class (professionals, executives, upper layers of “white colars” etc) is one of the main evolutions of the social structure in Greece (as well as in any advanced or relatively advanced capitalist economy) and it refers to structural and historical developments of the capitalist economy, which are themselves quite diverse: growth of certain functions in capitalist production/reproduction but also “de-industrialization”, the rise of certain branches situated in the “service” or “tertiary” sector of the economy, which itself is linked to processes of financialization etc. Therefore, they have an autonomous dynamics, hence the hesitancy: they are not necessarily associated with the “traditional petty-bourgeoisie”, the weight of which remains quite significant in Greece.

occupying an intermediate position in the productive process. On the one hand, this class is subjected politically and ideologically by the bourgeoisie but, on the other, its main role is in the activation and reproduction of the capitalist relations of exploitation and domination relations. Those functions are fragmented and differentiated as the result of the concentration and centralization of capital. Thus, the new petty-bourgeois class includes those responsible for supervising and organizing the labour system, realizing surplus value, overseeing the coherence of capitalist function and the legitimation of the reproduction of the existing social relations (Ibid.: 230-2). Finally, the class structure includes a number of cross-class social categories, such as farmers, public servants, intellectuals and the youth.

b. Particularities of the social structure in the Greek social formation.

We can now look at the particularities of class structure in the Greek social formation in more detail. Capitalist relations in Greece have historically supported and promoted the emergence of forms of small property and small production. In the post-war period, Greek society was characterized by a relatively stable structure of small property owners, economically active in small commodity production. Low rates of growth of wage employment (the lowest among the developed countries) and persisting numbers of self-employed and assisting family members have been constitutive elements of this pattern of capitalist development (Lytras 2007: 37-9). Lytras (1993: 187-208) has provided an interesting “X ray” of the employment and of the social structure up until the end of the 20th century: The economically active population was relatively limited. The share of wage labour was increasing, and self-employment declining, but both these processes progressed relatively slowly, with wage labour being relatively concentrated in services and in the public sector. Assisting family members was an important part of the structure of employment. The proportion

of employment in large industrial companies was falling, but it was increasing in crafts and small shops. In the rural economy small farmers and small scale crop production prevailed while the secondary sector, and especially in manufacturing, was dominated by small businesses. The working class remained relatively fragmented and the share of self-employment was significant, with two key features: firstly, it was dominated by individual independent capital and small production, and secondly, personal work was combined with the functions of management. There was thus a weakness in reproducing individual capital without an intense involvement of personal or family employment. This reality has led to theoretical formulations based on the generalization of tendencies which were not actually structural but corresponded to a specific period of relative growth. The most characteristic case is Tsoukalas' analysis on the "multi-valence" of the social subject⁸⁵. Tsoukalas' notion was based on the assumption that Greek society was becoming increasingly petty-bourgeois, while the actual tendency was the opposite (Moschonas 1986: 272; Lytras 1993: 87-8), as I will argue below.

The above reality largely resulted from the specific nature of the country's development course, which favoured in a systematic way the development of the petty-bourgeoisie, combined with certain political particularities. This process had a twofold target: firstly, the facilitation of the extraction of profit via a specific accumulation model⁸⁶; and secondly, the legitimization of bourgeois political dominance in the rather tumultuous post-war political scene (Moschonas 2004: 138; Moschonas 1986: 19, 31; Tsoukalas 1987: 31-2). This is why the arrangements promoted by the Greek state offered the petty-bourgeoisie the material means for its productive and reproductive activities. These means came mainly from the domestic surplus and the surplus arising

⁸⁵ There is no room here for an analytical overview of Tsoukalas' thesis. Suffice to say that in his view, class position is no longer identifiable and stable (Tsoukalas 1987: 147-149), and the identification and allocation of the agents into class positions is structurally hampered (Ibid.: 150). The theoretical background for this claim goes as follows: exploitation is tempered, coercion into labour is less and more indirectly economic, economic operators are de-individualized and forms of family solidarity are developing (Ibid.: 158-62), the role of labour loses both its centrality and its uniqueness (Ibid.: 179), the time and the energy of the workers are liberated (Ibid.: 184-85), together with phenomena involving a deliberate choice to escape from wage labour (Ibid.: 244). Here, the labour position is not examined as a position and a role in the organization of production, but as its result, as an income simply added on to other incomes. Thus, class position is defined not based on the position in production, but based on the position in the distribution of wealth (Lytras 1993: 102-03).

⁸⁶ In the last instance, the process of reinforcing petty-bourgeoisie aimed at facilitating the process of extracting social surplus and increasing capital accumulation.

from invisible receipts and remittances from abroad (Moschonas 2004: 138). The increase of the layers working in small commodity production was a direct result of the capitalist division of labour and produced a situation where their economic and political autonomy was restricted. Their role remained basically complementary to that of big capital, and was accompanied by certain ideological and political contradictions (creating both commonalities and divisions among them) (Moschonas 1986: 267). This constituted an anomalous form of exploitation, since the economic status of these strata was constantly under attack while at the same time the need for them to increase both their capital and their personal/family work was steadily growing (Lytras 1993: 248). It should be underlined at this point that the growth of such strata is not mainly due to political terms, but to economic factors: the development of services, the changes in the productive structure, the development of mechanisms of social reproduction in education, health etc. Being an indication of capitalist development, these tendencies do not refer solely to Greece. The political context in the country reinforced them.

To fully comprehend the complexity of these tendencies, the specific nature of the Greek model of capital accumulation needs to be borne in mind, as examined in the previous chapter. Specifically, high rates of capital accumulation went together with capital-intensive investments, but, at the same time, the production of means of production grew slowly. Major markets became dominated by monopolies or cartels, due to the competition and the internationalization, which, however, left gaps and niche markets providing opportunities for small businesses. These gaps emerged, partly from certain sectors proving unprofitable for monopolies, and partly from the intensification of labour exploitation (Sakellaropoulos and Sotiris 2004a: 165). In all this, the role of the state remained central. It supported the petty-bourgeois strata in the post-civil war environment by providing community aid, banking credit, and customs, tax and financial protection. It also undertook major productive initiatives, participated in fixed capital investment through public investments, and intervened economically and institutionally in the economy (eg. in manufacturing and construction sectors) (Lytras

1993: 171-3). The state had actually contributed to facilitating and protecting intrinsic accumulation. All these interventions have functioned as “indirect and controversial mechanisms of social assurance” (Ibid: 175).

These interventions underlined the engagement of the state in the economy, which however did not extend into the social sphere. Contrary to what is suggested by simplistic approaches, welfare state structures have never actually developed in Greece. In Southern Europe (with Greece and Portugal leading), a similar pattern in the path to prosperity emerged, “characterized by a delayed development of a social state, and limited universality of benefits combined with big gaps in social protection, in which traditional networks of family and friends remained essential. This model was also characterized by the fragmentation and the significant polarization of the social security system, as it existed, combined with the important role of clientelism in the distribution of resources and the provision of social protection” (Papatheodorou and Dafermos 2010: 13; see also Dafermos and Papatheodorou 2010: 40). Employment in the public sector was often seen as the only safe route to job security and enhanced social status. Thus, resorting to political favours and clientelism has been not only a means of forming social alliances, but also an indirect mechanism for garnering the mass support needed for the emergence of dominant political parties (Alexatos 1997: 83; Sakellarpoulos and Sotiris 2004a: 73; Lytras 1993: 194-95).

At this point, certain facts relating to employment in the public sector need to be clarified. Tsoukalas claims that, due to secure employment, work in this sector induces a process of de-proletarianization, which suggests that exploitation ceases to exist and that class differences among workers are abolished, based on the idea of secure employment (1987: 119-26, 253). I would claim that, on the contrary, civil servants constitute a cross-class group, with its most significant part belonging to the working class. The majority of workers in public enterprises (manufacturing, energy and water supply, communications, transport) are exploited: they exchange their labour with capital and are paid less than the value of the work they provide (Sakellarpoulos

2014b: 6-7)⁸⁷. Workers in education and the administrative staff of diverse organizations and ministries also belong to the working class, since they are exploited, do not possess any means of production and perform functions of collective work. Furthermore, their income, determined by state income policies in correlation to those of the private sector, does not exceed the level necessary for the reproduction of their workforce (Ibid.: 7). Many civil servants are temporary, part-time workers or face the prospect of being arbitrarily transferred. This tendency has become increasingly general as governmental measures in the face of the crisis include the dismantling of the foundations of public sector employment as constituted until recently, and more specifically, the abolition of job security.

The pattern of the class structure described above is imprinted on all sectors of Greek economy. The construction sector has seen a massive development linked to a certain reluctance to invest in manufacturing. The construction industry is fueled by the housing demand of a rapidly expanding urban population and underpinned by an entrenched tradition of parents providing housing for their children. This pattern is not only motivated by practical need, but also by the idea of the access to “property” as a safe investment in an economic landscape increasingly dominated by risk and uncertainty (Moschonas 1986: 52-3; Lytras 1993: 163). Of course, the overarching reason for investments being channeled towards the construction sector lies in the high rates of profit for investors (Mavris 1984: 11-2). The sector has been a dominant factor in the post-war Greek economy, although both the building industry and the property market have been characterized by low levels of capital investment. A network of small capital and artisanship has thus been able to develop. Small home ownership flourished due to the fragmentation in land ownership and the absence of a strong bourgeois fraction of landowners⁸⁸. Therefore, small scale ownership expanded, consolidating an alliance between the dominant class and the petty-bourgeois class as a whole. This process has had certain ideological consequences (prospects for

⁸⁷ Mavris, in a relevant argument suggests the term “half-proletarians” (1984: 6).

⁸⁸ Fragmentation in land ownership has allowed small owners to participate in the appropriation of social surplus in the form of rent.

climbing the social ladder, acquisition of private housing being a symbol of upward social mobility, an underlying conservatism) (Ibid.: 12-4; Charalampis 1985: 88). Small ownership in real estate was one of the three models that pervaded the entire heterogeneous, traditional petty-bourgeois strata in Greece, the other two being small production and self-employment (Lytras 1993: 214). The imperative for home ownership has been, for most people, a guarantee of social stability, but also their response to the necessity of covering housing needs in a stable way in an environment of high rents and employment instability. Small property could guarantee survival, in a context of a precarious labour market and reduced income or in the face of the threat of impoverishment of a broad swathe of the workforce (Lytras 1993: 247).

Two more features of the Greek social formation must be borne in mind: (1) the historical role of the mechanisms of social reproduction, especially education and its fetishization, as one of the fundamental means of upward social mobility and economic security in a landscape of intense, competitive inequality lacking any “safety net” of welfare and social benefits (as examined in chapter II); and (2) the specific weight of immigrants in the Greek social formation and particularly in the division of labour⁸⁹. As for the second factor, immigrant workers are rarely taken into account when studying the Greek labour market, although they have become agents of a transformation that strongly affects the composition and the structure of the Greek society. In 2005, before the last mass waves of migration into Greece, registered immigrant workers constituted 9.6% of the entire active population workforce (Rombolis 2005: 35). According to the same study, 37% of them worked as unskilled, manual workers, 27% as craftsmen, 4.4% as operators in the means of transport, 10.4% in services and sales (including work in street markets), 7% as farmers and 13.7% in other or undeclared occupations. In terms of sectors of economic activity, 25% worked in the construction industry, 18% in the primary sector, 12% in the industry, 11% in private households, 8% in sales and

⁸⁹ Immigrant labour is characterized by poor working conditions and pay far below the average, due to intimidation and fear of expulsion, low levels of trade-unionism, and the refusal of the host country to undertake the indirect costs of reproduction of the workforce. Immigrants have been massively exploited and treated as guinea pigs for experiments in decreasing levels of pay and employment rights for the entire working class, forced at the same time to work under terms that would have been totally unacceptable to the indigenous working class.

8% in hotels and restaurants (Ibid.: 36). Thus, the vast majority of them have to be included in any assessment of the working class (respective findings may be found in a slightly subsequent research of INE-GSEE, Bagkavos 2008: 36-9 and in Kontis et al 2006: 41).

c. The class structure and its transformations.

After having examined the main aspects of the class structure in the Greek social formation, I shall now analyze the transformations it underwent in the period preceding the crisis and its current characteristics. This analysis will lead to an account of the class structure during the period of the emergence of the movements which will be studied in the forthcoming chapters. The consolidation of neoliberalism, the modernization project and the processes of capitalist restructuring after the end of the 1980s' reshaped the previous configuration and consolidated counteracting tendencies to the ones hitherto discussed. The main thrust of the capital-lead strategies which transformed the class structure lies in five tendencies: (1) the consolidation of austerity politics; (2) the expansion of forms of flexible employment; (3) the broadening of social inequalities; (4) the destruction of the productive fabric; and (5) the growth of unemployment (Sakellariopoulos 2014b: 14). Their result has been the intensification of downwards social mobility and the exacerbation of class struggle. Petty-bourgeois strata have shrunk and the proportion of wage labour increased. Sakellariopoulos, in studying the 1981 -1991 period, has highlighted the transformation of the Greek society from a "traditional" one to "a society in transition". This change consisted of a significant decrease in the poor rural strata, an increase both in sections of the petty-bourgeois class and in the working class, and a significant reduction of farmers (Sakellariopoulos 2014a: 290). In the period that followed, capital expanded into areas and sectors which had not previously been the primary terrains of exploitation, or into services which were previously provided by the state in a non-commodified form. This whole process led to

an expansion of the working class. Furthermore, a process of real, and not simply formal, subordination of labour to capital took place, leading to the proletarianization of the strata which had formerly kept a level of control over the productive process. Another important factor to be mentioned when estimating the size of the working class is the increase in the number of foreign workers, of workers on short term contracts⁹⁰, and of unregistered family members working in family-owned businesses (Katsoridas 2004: 159).

According to Moschonas (2004: 142), “the shifting logic of the class structure of Greek society is determined by the changing requirements and the dictates of the capital accumulation model”. The author locates three main factors in this transformation, especially in respect to the petty-bourgeois strata: The decisive one is the dominant position of capital. Secondly, the state withdrew from several of its traditional functions supporting these petty-bourgeois strata due to the process of market liberalization. Thirdly, there is a tendency towards rationalizing the productive process in the small property and small production sectors in order to increase competitiveness in the unified European market. This has brought about a polarization, both within petty-bourgeois strata, and in their relation to big capital (Ibid.: 138-39). Entry into the EU and liberalization of the markets appear as crucial factors in those transformations (Moschonas 2004: 143; Lytras 2007: 55). The petty-bourgeois strata have turned towards cheap loans and the informal economy after the withdrawal of state support (Lytras 2007: 42-3); while the share of wage labour has increased, leading to an expansion of the working class (Ibid.: 52; Mavris 1984: 13). This tendency towards the proletarianization of petty-bourgeois strata has had two potentially conflicting results: on the one hand these strata have tried to form an alliance with big capital in order to secure their future, and on the other hand, they have been radicalized against big capital in terms of political consciousness.

⁹⁰ For the Labour Institute of GSEE, the total rise in rates of those registered as unemployed (there is such a rise during the 2000s') probably refers to false employment: it actually expresses an extension of wage labour under the form of short term contracts (INE-GSEE 2012: 303), entailing important advantages for employers and violations of fundamental rights for employees.

These tendencies have been confirmed by many researchers. Classic Marxist analyses, although underestimating the historical constitution of petty-bourgeois strata in the Greek social formation and examining the class structure in a relatively static way, have shed some light on these. Kappos (1987: 59-60) underlined the gradual increase of wage labour⁹¹. He noted that, despite the cross-class character of wage labourers, such statistics provide data on the configuration of the working class (evolution over time, internal composition), though not on others (income and education level etc.). Fractions of the intellectual strata have also experienced proletarianization (including higher education graduates), in parallel with an expansion of the access to higher education for students of working class origin. Finally, the tendency for social knowledge to become a direct productive force developed (Kappos 1987: 152-53; KME 2000: 101; Kotzias 1979: 35-6, 163; Papadopoulos 1987: 187-88). The Centre for Marxist Studies has identified several factors contributing to the enlarged reproduction of the working class: changes in sectors of the economy, internal migration, the closure of small and medium size businesses in urban centres, the arrival of immigrants, the increase in the population etc (KME 2000: 120).

Researchers working from different theoretical starting points, have argued that the structure of Greek society underwent a qualitative change; with the petty-bourgeois strata no longer constituting its dominant element (Lytras, 2007: 20). The policies dealing with the current crisis have rapidly exacerbated this shift by fully dismantling those elements of the previous implicit social contract which provided certain basic guarantees to the petty-bourgeois strata. The memoranda and the legislation and regulations accompanying them, had a direct impact on the property rights and the economic activities of the petty-bourgeoisie⁹². Moreover, within the intensification of the concentration and centralization of capital, self-employment in small businesses has plunged and small retail outlets have struggled to survive. A new configuration has thus

⁹¹ The numbers go as follows: 1928: 28.6%, 1952: 36.9%, 1981: 48.8%. Comparative dynamics in relation to other developed countries is of course important. Thus, in 1981 in Portugal the rate of wage labourers in comparison to the EAP is 67.1%. in Spain 69.8%, in Italy 71.3%, in France 83.1%, in Germany 85.3%, in the USA 90.6%, in Great Britain 91.1% and in Sweden 92.1% (Moschonas 1986: 55).

⁹² Indicatively, such are the tax measures ("hikes") which render small property finally unprofitable, in parallel with a weakness in disposing of properties to be rented or exploited because of the crisis.

emerged in the class structure of the Greek society. In his study of the transformations of the social structure over the last three decades Sakellariopoulos, reached the following conclusions concerning the situation in 2014 compared to the respective ones of 1981 (2014a: 316-20): (1) an increase of the bourgeois class to 2.8% (from 1.8%), as well as of the affluent rural strata (0.6% from 0.3%), due to the long pre-2008 period of economic growth (accompanied by a process of internationalization and concentration of capital, especially in agricultural production), and to de-ruralization; (2) a huge shrinkage in the weight of the traditional petty-bourgeois class (6.9% from 16%), as well as reduction of the middle rural strata (1.3% from 3.3%), due to the intensification of the same processes of concentration and centralization; (3) an important increase of the new petty-bourgeois class (25.3% from 9.8%), due to the increasing demand for their abilities in achieving returns on capital and extending its scope. This tendency is however accompanied by efforts by the capital to subsume these strata into more direct capital exploitation and domination; (4) an important increase of the working class (55.3% from 43.2%), as a consequence of the centralization of the economy, of rural migration, and of the effects of the crisis; and (5) a decrease of the poor rural strata (7.1% from 21.9%), mainly due to the rural exodus. These figures suggest a clear tendency towards class polarization, a tendency which has intensified during the crisis and leads potentially to a social structure which would converge with other advanced European countries. Indicatively, wage labour in 2011 was estimated to have grown to 64% (Kouzis 2011a: 165) (from 48.8% in 1981).

This tendency towards class polarization is re-enforced by the rise of inequality and poverty. According to the findings of Tsoulfidis, the ratio of the disposable income of the top 10% of the population in comparison to the lowest 10% has increased, from 10.7 times higher in 2007 to 12.6 times higher in 2012. The number of the very rich people in Greece has risen considerably, since 505 persons in 2013 owned personal property the value of which is estimated above 30 million dollars (over 455 persons in 2012 and 445 persons in 2010). In 2013, the value of this property increased by 20%

since 2012 and represents 24% of GDP⁹³ (Tsoulfidis 2014: 19). Other indicators of inequality confirm this polarization. As shown in chapter II, inequality and poverty have always been particularly high in Greece. In 2010, Greece ranked second in the EU inequality indexes (Gini index: 33.9, in Papatheodorou and Dafermos 2010: 15). Other social transfers (excluding pensions)⁹⁴ have been very low, contributing much less than in any other country in the EU27 (65.9%) to lowering inequalities and poverty⁹⁵ (Ibid.: 23). According to several studies, none of the basic population characteristics can satisfactorily explain the levels of inequality: thus the main reason is low incomes (Ibid.: 25). Poverty indexes are just as high. In 2007, Greece had the highest poverty rate in the EU15 (20.1%, of which 14% was long-term poverty and the poverty gap was at 24.7), excluding immigrants (Ibid.: 29). Simultaneously, the satisfaction of basic needs becomes increasingly problematic: in 2011, 29% could not easily pay their utility bills and 18.6% could not ensure heating in their house, whilst the index of material deprivation (weakness of satisfaction of at least three basic needs) was at 28.4% (INE-GSEE n.d.). Just in 2010, 940,000 power cut off orders for unpaid bills were issued (whilst power prices were 40% higher for domestic consumption and 8.5% lower for large companies) (Mpogiopoulos 2011: 318). Inequalities affecting specific social groups, involving gender, regional, racial and other inequalities also rose dramatically, inducing rates of social marginalization (Antonopoulou et al. 2011: 12). The social categories affected mostly by the crisis were the women, the youth and immigrants. At the same time no measures to counteract discrimination were passed (Kouzis et al. 2012: 47-8), such measures being considered as a “luxury” in times of crisis.

The IMF is famous for advocating policies of austerity leading to the increase of income inequalities, the reduction of the share of labour in income distribution, the rise in unemployment, the expansion of informal labour and the rise of poverty. These

⁹³ The tendency afterwards kept increasing: in 2014, the number of billionaires rose from 9 to 11 and their wealth from 16 to 18 billion dollars. Data coming from tax controls report that 850 persons have bank accounts above 100 million euros each, meaning that the total amount is above 85 billion euros, more than half of the country's GDP (Tsoulfidis 2014: 19).

⁹⁴ Other social transfers include any sort of allowances provided by the state based on certain social criteria and constitute an index of social protection.

⁹⁵ Pensions are the only ones having such a relative contribution, but policies during the crisis have resulted to a drastic decrease in the size of pensions.

policies primarily affect low and middle income families and are accompanied by negative social effects in the countries implementing them (Michopoulou 2012: 33-7). In Greece, those policies have led to what can be called a humanitarian crisis (Papakonstantinou 2013: 12). They have induced a sharp rearrangement of the relationship between Greek capitalism and the social structure, and have, in practical terms, led to a direct assault on established rights gained during the previous decades and on collective organization.

A picture of the transformation in the Greek economy and society during the crisis reveals that just in 2011, real incomes fell by 25.3% (INE-GSEE 2012: 15), whilst real wages fell in 2010-2011 by 13.2% in comparison to 2009. The rate of real wages in relation to the EU15 average fell to 68.5%, returning to the 1993 levels (Ibid.: 22). The purchasing power fell in 2010-2011 by 22.8% (Ibid.: 21). In 2011, Greece outpaced any other EU country in the reduction of the labour cost and workers' earnings in the public and the private sector⁹⁶. The disparity between the purchasing power of wage labourers and labour productivity widened dramatically (Ibid.: 22). Pensions were severely reduced, by 25-50% (Kouzis et al. 2012: 184). In 2009-2011, private consumption was reduced by 18.8%, whilst in 2010-2011 public consumption was reduced by 16.9% (INE-GSEE 2012: 21-2). This landscape signaled an effort to realign the Greek economy to lower levels of production, investment and living standards (Ibid.: 110). The public sector was severely affected by limitations on recruitment, reduction in income and allowances, changes in the nature of employment, the facilitation of redundancies and more generally by an imposed convergence with the private sector (Kouzis et al. 2012: 184). Unemployment ballooned, reaching 24% in 2012 (INE-GSEE 2012: 334), with female unemployment much greater than male reaching 26.5% in the first trimester of 2012 (Ibid.: 308). Youth unemployment reached 52.8% (Ibid.: 307), while long-term unemployment more than doubled (715,000 in absolute numbers in 2012 in comparison to 283,000 in 2010) (INE-GSEE n.d.)⁹⁷. At the same time, unemployment

⁹⁶ Reduction of hourly labour cost per 6.8% (eurozone: +2.6% and EU27: +2.7%). Reduction of workers' incomes cost per 6.2% (eurozone +2.3% and EU27 +2.6%) (Georgiadou et al. 2012: 98).

⁹⁷ According to Kouzis' data, long-term unemployment in 2011 formed the majority, while two thirds of the unemployed were not registered in OAED, because of the lack of benefits and of trust in its efficiency

benefits are very low, both in terms of their amount and their duration (INE-GSEE 2012: 334). Thus, despite the important fall of nominal wages and labour costs, neither unemployment nor prices correspondingly declined (Ibid.: 24). Finally, a significant part of the workforce, especially the skilled and educated layers, emigrated in order to find jobs abroad (Ibid.: 335; Kouzis et al. 2012: 23).

The implementation of the memoranda also led to the abolition of the institutions of collective bargaining, accelerating the rise of inequalities and class polarization. After the implementation of the second memorandum, Greece is the only EU country to have seen a nominal reduction of the minimum wage by 22%, (32% for young people below the age of 25) (INE-GSEE 2012: 221). Multiple legislative interventions have aimed at decentralizing collective bargaining, to reduce the labour cost and institute the individualization of wages. Laws directly reducing the labour cost were imposed in the private sector (Kapsalis and Triantafyllou 2012: 10). At the level of collective agreements, the principle of the most favourable setting was abolished⁹⁸, employers were allowed to evade complying with the NGGA defining a national minimum wage, individual agreements were imposed (especially for the youth: up to 80% of the normal wage) and arbitration was restricted (Kouzis et al. 2012: 190). The average working week has been increased from 37.5 to 40 hours (contrary to the well-known clichés on the “lazy Greeks”), while employers were given the ability to require overtime above the legal working week (Ibid: 46-7, 51). Flexible forms of employment rose dramatically, consisting mainly in part-time and job rotation, both by the introduction of new agreements and by altering existing ones⁹⁹. Further, the majority of part-time job agreements are non-voluntary (62% in 2012 in comparison to 50% in 2010) (INE-GSEE n.d.). The share of those informally employed has increased (28.6% of GDP),

(2011a: 166).

⁹⁸ This principle defined that if two contradictory settings were valid for the same worker, the most favourable for her would be applied.

⁹⁹ The number of agreements in flexible forms of employment rose by 5.81% in 2011 in comparison to 2009 (and by 22% in 2010 in comparison to 2009). The greater change refers to contracts in full employment altered to part-time or job rotation (from 4,839 in 2009 to 26,542 in 2011, an increase of 448%) (INE-GSEE 2012: 363-64). In 2011, agreements in flexible forms dominated in new recruitments for the first time. In the first nine months of 2011, the total rate of full employment agreements was 59% (79% in 2009), the rate of part-time agreements was 32.5% (17% in 2009) and that of job rotation was 8.5% (4% in 2009) (Georgiadou et al. 2012: 143).

and so have informal labour and the underground economy (Antonopoulou et al. 2011: 37-8). Finally, cases of arbitrary practices by employers and of labour rights violation are proliferating, with the share of jobs deprived of social insurance reaching 27% (Kouzis et al. 2012: 22, 199). The influence of trade-unionism was persistently attacked, whilst the substantive abolition of collective agreements has effectively deprived unions of much of their power. The re-configuration of the social structure has been further influenced by increases in taxation (and particularly, in indirect taxation which intensify inequalities), by the reduction of the GDP¹⁰⁰ and by the overall social and economic deterioration accompanying the recession (Michopoulou 2012).

d. Specific features of the working class.

As analyzed above, the weight of the working class has increased in Greece, however still lagging behind the levels of the rest of Europe. But size alone is not the only important characteristic of the working class: it is necessary to look beyond size and study the forms and the structures of its organization. Broader changes in the productive process (including automatization, post-fordism etc.) influenced the composition of the working class itself (Katsoridas 1994: 1), and increased its level of exploitation¹⁰¹ (KME 2000: 79-80). The expansion of the working class and the specific nature of the Greek social structure have both contributed to its fragmentation and heterogeneity. Of course, the working class has never been fully homogeneous anywhere; however, in Greece the level of this heterogeneity is particularly significant. The factors mainly contributing in this are: (1) the serious dispersion in terms of consistency (due to small productive units, the diffusion of the productive process in space, the relocation of productive activities in areas with no trade-union traditions, the decay of industrial areas with militant and combative traditions etc.); (2) the intense

¹⁰⁰ GDP fell by 16.7% in 2009-2011 in relation to 2007 (INE-GSEE 2012: 20), thus GDP per capita was at 82% of the average in the EU (Ibid.: 21).

¹⁰¹ Related to an increase in the extraction of surplus-value, the intensification of labour, and the extension of the working day.

xenophobic and racist behaviour towards immigrants; and (3) the general deployment of a numerous and cheap workforce, contributing to the squeeze on labour costs and the increase in profitability of particular sectors of the Greek economy (Sakellaropoulos and Sotiris 2004a: 124-25). The strategies followed by capital have aimed at the dissolution of the large concentrations of the working class, mainly through flexibility in the setting up of the productive units (Moschonas 2005: 291-92). The persistence of small and middle-size enterprises has intensified the fragmentation and dispersal of the working class (Katsoridas 1994: 4).

Changes in labour relations have substantially influenced the structure and the organization of the work force, as well as the form of its exploitation. As Stratoulis emphasizes, "The substance of capitalist exploitation remains unchanged. The ways, however; the methods and forms of exploitation are not stable. They are constantly readjusted and their change is the result of the development of the production forces and of class struggle; the scientific and technical revolution; the exacerbation of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism; and its general crisis" (Stratoulis 1987: 9). Labour flexibility has been of great importance in this process. The expansion of flexible labour relations resulted in weakening the collective identity of workers and, ultimately, in the dissolution of their collective organization (Karakioulafi 2005: 192). In addition, workers under flexible labour relations have to face the constant stress of surviving in parallel to competition with each other for the renewal of their contracts or alternatively finding a new job. This reality, combined with the fluctuating working hours and low wages, overwhelms workers, acting upon their alienation from ideas of collective organization.

The unprecedented rise in unemployment, which tends to become a structural feature, should also be taken into account when studying the forms of organization of labour and the difficulties they have to face. This phenomenon has exacerbated during the crisis, as already shown. According to Fredric Jameson, "the phenomenon of unemployment today is a different and far more ominous symptom of systemic crisis than in previous depressions" and "the structural unemployment in Marx's conception

of the 'reserve army of capitalism,' once a secondary feature of this system, moves to the very forefront of its analysis today.”¹⁰² (Jameson 2011: 148). As Toscano (Toscano 2012) underlines, “The incapacity to politicize unemployment outside of a weak and ambiguous demand for the right to work, job programmes and the retention of some of the benefit-structures of the welfare state is one of the salient features of the ongoing crisis.”

The consequences of rising unemployment are manifested in the breakdown in workers' organization, the rise of individualization and de-socialization and the difficulty in finding common references and countering union decline (Katsoridas 1994: 6). The absence of productive activity undermines the sense of identity and self-respect of the unemployed, in addition to the obvious material threat to their wellbeing, which is made worse by their lack of bargaining power and their difficulty in exercising organized social pressure¹⁰³. Unemployment is central to the hurdles towards the formation of class consciousness, since the latter is articulated around the *identity* and not just the *position* of a working class. Thus, proletarianization straight into unemployment, a phenomenon of frequent occurrence, has significant impact on the formation of the subject's consciousness. Moreover, the identity of the unemployed is fluid, often experienced as temporary and non-desirable. Their autonomous organization presents thus additional difficulties: the unemployed are inclined to repress their identity rather than using it as a reference for collective action and organization¹⁰⁴. The psychological implications and effects on socialization are also evident: the lack of a social contribution becomes internalized as a personal problem, whilst unemployment is

¹⁰² It should be noted at this point that, for Marx, unemployment has never been a secondary feature of capitalism. On the contrary, it was a very central feature of the “capitalist population law”.

¹⁰³ An abstract from an interview I conducted during my fieldwork is indicative at this point: (I1) speaks in favour of political participation claiming that *“If I can participate, I will, because I want to, because it helps a collective cause, and, eh, it changes you, it makes you feel differently... in this whole situation, in which we all feel useless because we can do nothing... because I am unemployed and... they exercise a psychological violence to you, and they... they want to destroy you. I feel like they want to make you feel like nobody, that you do not even need to speak, they know what to do, they will do it for you, they just want you to follow them. No! When I chose to be on the other side, I felt at last useful, and we are all useful, and we all have something to contribute, and something to give, if we participate in this whole thing”*.

¹⁰⁴ Intensification of the long-term unemployment has somehow transformed these feelings, since the unemployed are less keen to blame exclusively themselves, and this identity is often experienced as less temporary. However, personal belief of being somehow able to overcome this situation, usually dominates over acceptance of the deadlock and action against it, at least at the level of consciousness.

institutionalized as a “natural condition of existence”. Structural and long-term unemployment tend to marginalize and impoverish a large segment of the population, resulting in the reduction of the size of workforce, while putting downward pressure on employment rights at every level of workers actively involved in employment (KME 2000: 279).

In addition, many of the self-employed are actually part of the relative overpopulation, with incomes lower than those of unskilled workers, and an inability to obtain jobs as wage labourers (Papadopoulos 1987: 153; Kappos 1987: 119). Finally, the weakness of the efforts to organize and mobilize immigrant workers for collective action must be recognized. As mentioned above, the jobs available to most immigrants are characterized by deplorable conditions, clearly violating fundamental labour rights. In these fractions of the working population, pauperization, the fear of deportation, intimidation, and a weak bargaining position and lack of trade-union representation prevail. Immigrants develop strong tendencies towards subordination to the dominant strategies, and are essentially excluded from collective processes and structures.

Thus, to sum up, the working class as a whole in Greece is characterized by important internal differentiations, related to: (1) the degree of accumulation and working conditions per sector; (2) the degree of specialization; (3) education level; (4) social origin; (5) exclusive in one sector or not employment; (6) wage levels; and (7) way of life (Mavris 1983: 10; Katsoridas 2004: 148). Such a degree of differentiation compromises the potential for collective action and the viability of the forms of organization of the social (Katsoridas 2004: 148). These differences have had an inevitable impact upon the levels of class consciousness of the different segments of the working class. Besides, class relations are not always evident, even among the mobilized sectors, mainly due to the lack of a linear continuity between social movements and their political expression. Individualization prevents workers from acquiring the consciousness of their common class position. In addition to the pre-existing factors of heterogeneity, those newly proletarianized strata of petty-bourgeois origins have a type of consciousness different from the traditional working class.

These multiple differences in the forms of consciousness and the frames of reference extend beyond the proletarianized petty-bourgeois strata and encompass those still connected to small property. According to Kouzis (2007: 52), the relationship of a portion of wage labourers to small property and self-employment, either materially or as a legacy from the previous generation, has had a negative impact on the formation of their consciousness as wage earners. It has also contributed to efforts to maintain the links with small property ownership, which brings in some residual income (labour in the primary sector, rents from land or home ownership exploitation of real estate)¹⁰⁵. In the present context of crisis, the weight of such factors declines and this aspect acquires an ideological rather than a material role. Similar phenomena affect the proletarianized strata of intellectual labour, who still hold high level degrees and a potential for upwards class mobility out of the reach of the average worker (Kotzias 1979: 36). This prospect impacts on their consciousness, in relation to their entry into the productive process and their difficulty in building links with the rest of the labour movement. Such differentiations in consciousness are also apparent in proletarianized workers with origins related to rural or craft employment (Sarlis 1987: 25). To conclude on this point, according to Kouzis, “contemporary wage labourer has lost the homogeneity of the past with respect to the composition of wage labour”, while “artificial distinctions appear more and more within wage labour, limiting bonds of solidarity among employees” (Kouzis 2011a: 188-89).

However, countering to a certain extent this image, a certain consciousness of common interests among workers also seems to be emerging. In a related research conducted by Kouzis (2011a: 186-88), 85% of workers working in the same company thought of their interests as being common, 69% thought the same when asked about the distinction between young and old workers (though 25% thought the contrary), 62% claimed common interests between Greeks and foreigners (34% for different ones), 56% between skilled and unskilled (40% different), 42% for workers in the private

¹⁰⁵ Besides, in Greece there has existed a historical tendency of belittlement and deliberate avoidance of wage labour and being identified as working-class, as compared to maintaining typical independence, basically related to self-employment. See also (Alexatos 1997: 84; Tsoukalas 1987: 244, 267-85).

sector and those in the public one (55% different). As for workers in different positions in the hierarchy, 26% supported having common interests (68% different), and when the question referred specifically to the interests between employers and employees, only 10% thought of them as common (86% different). This contradictory reality brings us to the contradictory nature of the working class itself. This contradiction is inherent to the formation of a class which is, on the one hand, the one term of the capital-labour relationship, contributing both objectively and subjectively to its reproduction, and, on the other hand, a force that is external and antagonistic to this very relationship (Mpelantis 2014: 252). This duality results in the contradictory tendencies, towards emancipation and subordination, which are inherent to the working class, as well as in the contradictory forms of the social and political consciousness of the working class. These points will be further examined later.

e. Main features of the labour and trade-union movement in Greece.

The analysis of the characteristics of the class structure in Greece, and of its transformations during the crisis was necessary for a deeper understanding of the forms and features of the labour and the broader social movement in Greece. I will now focus on the main historical elements that influenced its development. Three of these have been of decisive importance. Firstly, the national trade-union confederation GSEE was founded belatedly, in 1918, reflecting an overall weak organization of the working class. The identification of the foundation of active trade-union organizations with their constitutional legitimization has reinforced their law-abiding nature. This has been to the detriment of their engagement in more radical demands and forms of protest. Secondly, the specific features of the Greek social structure worked against open class confrontation and led to the very principle of class struggle itself being disputed. The recognition of the existence of this struggle was one of the first debates within the

GSEE, and the principle was finally included in its constitutive charter (Kouzis 2007: 34).

Lastly, the various governments have been consistent in following a dual strategy vis-a-vis trade-unions: continuous efforts were made to subvert them politically and, by exerting political control, turn confederations and trade-unions into virtual arms of the state, while simultaneously suppressing class-oriented forces within the labour movement¹⁰⁶ (Katsoridas 2008: 59; 91). Koukoules mentions that the GSEE itself, during the inter-war period, was “a state apparatus of a police nature aimed at debilitating the union movement” (Koukoules 1995: 15). Especially during the dictatorship of Metaxas (1936-1940), trade-unionism was directly subordinated to the state (Kouzis 2007: 34). Eventually, the two national confederations of workers and civil servants GSEE and ADEDY enthusiastically welcomed the military dictatorship of 1967 (History Front 2013), while state intervention in the trade-union movement continued after the fall of the military regime in 1974. The leadership of GSEE and ADEDY were actually appointed by the successive governments and the whole period saw the continuation of the dual strategy of control and repression. It was not until 1982 that, thanks to the law 1264/1982, democratic elections in the trade-union movement were at last safeguarded, which allowed the first democratic congress of the GSEE to be convened in 1983. However, in 1985 the PASOK government intervened anew in the constitution of the Confederation’s leadership, deposing its elected executive committee.

This historical reality has had contradictory effects for the ruling class: on the one hand, it has, in certain cases, succeeded in the persecution and suppression of the most radical segments of the labour movement. On the other hand, it has allowed the potential of greater radicalization, raising levels of political conflict in parallel with the enervation of the official trade-union institutions. The Left has actually followed a policy aimed at maintaining the unity of the trade-union movement, historically establishing its

¹⁰⁶ Classic examples are the “idionymon” act (a special legal act of Venizelos government in 1929 penalizing all standard practices of the trade-union movement), the persecutions of the Metaxas dictatorship in 1936-1941, the constant expulsions of militants from trade-unions etc.

unified expression¹⁰⁷. At the same time, at certain moments in history, the labour movement has moved beyond from the boundaries of traditional trade-unionism. Two cases are worth mentioning: (1) in 1962-63, a coalition of workers' organizations, named SEO-115, managed to rally 682 trade-unions expelled from the GSEE, and (2) during the Metapolitefsi, a factory-based industrial movement appeared at the grassroots level, outside the framework of official bodies, and adopted radical demands, forms of protest and organization. More generally, as Alexatos emphasizes, the trade-union movement has at all stages of modern Greek history developed in a political context very different from the “normal” standards of Western parliamentary democracy (1997: 77).

The trade-union movement has been historically active in terms of industrial action: strikes and work stoppages have been frequent, despite anti-labour laws banning strike action and the application of severely repressive measures against the labour movement¹⁰⁸ (Kappos 1987: 92). A combative spirit also developed, rooted in the strong links between the trade-union movement and left-wing political parties and the reaction to the interventionist and confrontational role of the state and the authoritarian tradition of employers (Kouzis 2007: 222-25). In the period between 1970-1980, strikes were on the rise, linked to the wider political effervescence of the time. Strike mobilizations have, however, had the character of symbolic protests rather than actual demands (Dedousopoulos 2007). A large number of such strikes, combined with their limited duration is indicative of this symbolic character. Nevertheless, in relation to other European countries, union militancy and assertiveness have indeed remained active; 44% (38 out of 98) of all the general strikes across Europe between 1980 and 2008 took place in Greece (Kelly and Hamann 2010). This figure, although impressive, is related both to the specific political situation in Greece and the concrete features of trade-union movements, as described below, and also to the generally less confrontational nature of trade-union movements in the rest of Europe. During the

¹⁰⁷ The single exception was the foundation of Unified GSEE in 1928-34 because of intense persecution of left-wing trade-unionists.

¹⁰⁸ Such was a special unit in the police, known as “the trade-union force”, a section of the National Security forces responsible for covertly monitoring trade-unionists and trade-union processes.

1980s', industrial conflict peaked in Greek history and Greece became "the European champion of strikes for the entire 1970-1993 period": 43% of the days not worked in Europe are the result of the Greek strikes alone (Aligisakis 1997: 86). This reality, among the other reasons examined in this chapter, is strongly related to the real material and institutional gains for labour in Greece in Metapolitefsi (including the -incomplete- creation of welfare structures and the passing of one of the most favourable to trade-unions labour legislation in Europe).

The election victory of PASOK in 1981 had a major influence on the development of the trade-union movement. A fairly favourable legislative framework was passed, based on a model of bureaucratic co-management between trade-unions and the state which also involved employers. This model worked effectively in times of economic growth. In this context, trade-unions were for the first time institutionally integrated into a form of negotiated social compromise. The environment created by this new reality partly explains both the mollification of the confrontational nature of the trade-union movement, and the ability of the two systemic political parties, PASOK and ND, to build an exceptional hegemony lasting for decades. This hegemony also meant that both these parties, but primarily PASOK, developed organic links with the trade-union movement. This was a major innovation in social and professional relations, and brought with it new complexities, i.e. in the mixture of party-mediated clientelism, bureaucratized bargaining and instances of controlled confrontation.

During the 1990s', successive governments gradually retreated from the idea of integrating workers' demands. The combative character of the trade-union movement declined gradually due to a combination of factors: a moderation in the forms of politicization, an increase of EU influence, the creation of institutions for social partnership, the decline in union density, and the emergence of a corporatist tradition favouring consensus (Kouzis 2007: 228-36)¹⁰⁹. Consensual attitudes on behalf of the trade-unions have not only failed to prevent the deterioration of the workers' position,

¹⁰⁹ Indicatively, in the 2008 INE-GSEE/VPRC research, 63% of participants claimed that the most appropriate way of treating labour issues was with "dialogue and negotiation", whilst only 24% put forward "mobilizations/demonstrations and strikes"; in 2010 respective figures were 72% and 18% (INE-GSEE/VPRC 2008; INE-GSEE/VPRC 2010).

but actually led to a further decline in trade-union density, strength and credibility (Seferiades 1999). Thus, during the 1990s' and particularly after 1994, the number of strikes and of the workers participating (Kouzis 2007: 238) declined significantly. However, up until the crisis, the above reality was never completely reversed. This is the reason why the memoranda targeted, and succeeded, in dismantling all these elements of social compromise between capital and labour that are associated with Metapolitefsi. But they did because these elements were still there, although many of their aspects had degenerated into forms of extreme bureaucratic and clientelist management of social relations. In other terms, to understand the break brought by the Memoranda we need to clarify that contrary to what happened in most European countries, where the 1980s' were the period of triumphant neoliberalism, in Greece that was essentially a period of consolidation of certain gains for labour in the broader context of the socio-political compromise of the Metapolitefsi. This reality, in its turn, is tied to the lack of such gains in the previous of Metapolitefsi years, and the consolidation of an authoritarian, broadly anti-popular state.

As for the particular characteristics of the traditional trade-union movement in Greece, only a few studies have delved into them, the most important being by Kouzis (2007). The trade-union movement is structured in local or workplace-based branches, federations and confederations. The dominant form of rank-and-file organization is trade-unions organized mainly at a workplace, company or professional branch level. Union density has not been particularly high (17% in 2004, according to VPRC 2004¹¹⁰) and declines over the last fifteen years, due to a combination of external and internal factors¹¹¹. The trade-union movement's organizational expression has been reasonably

¹¹⁰ The degree of unionization is difficult to calculate; thus different estimates exist in the literature. In a VPRC research (VPRC 2004), the extent of unionization is estimated to be 21.1% for 2003 and 17% for 2004. Kouzis has estimated it at 28% for 2004 (2007: 57-8). GSEE and ADEDY conferences in 2004 have announced a 22% unionization rate, based on financial contribution (Vernardakis, Mayreas and Patronis, 2007: 12). According to the OECD statistics, the unionization rate was 26.8% in 1999, and declined down to 21.3% in 2012 (OECD n.d.). In any case, in the entire 2000 years, trade-union density in Greece is higher than the OECD average. In Europe, the countries with higher rates are the Northern European ones, Belgium, Austria, Italy, Ireland and the UK. Thus the union density in Greece is higher than in France or Germany and than in all countries of Southern Europe, with the exception of Italy. The downward trend is general (OECD average falls from 20,8% in 1999 to 16,9% in 2013), but in Greece the decline seems to follow the average (from 26,8 to 21,3%), despite the recession shock, a fact that is interpreted as a remarkable sign of resilience.

¹¹¹ External factors refer to high unemployment; decline in industrial employment; development of flexible forms of employment; increase in female employment; intensification of internationalization; retreat of

unified, but also differentiated and fragmented according to the employment status¹¹² (Kouzis 2007: 92, 105). Trade-unionism has also been severely polarized between the public and private sector¹¹³, whilst the predominance of small enterprises¹¹⁴ has exacerbated the lack of representation of broad groups of the workforce. Furthermore, unions have not generally been economically and political independent, especially from the state (Kouzis 2007: 131, 175; Tsakiris 2012).

Another important feature of the trade-union movement in Greece is its partisan nature: unions are heavily influenced by and inter-connected to political parties¹¹⁵. Clientelism has permeated these relationships, whilst there is a particular lack of a proper union culture (Kouzis 2007: 42-3 and 191-203; Katsoridas 2008: 143). This process translates into the frequent access of union cadres to political posts, and the enhanced role of union leaders in internal party conflicts and party leadership elections (Sokos 2011). Practically, in most cases, trade-union tactics and strategy are decided by centres of political power external to trade-unions and then returned to them (Tsakiris 2012). Political identity has dominated over workers' social position on their representation. This reality is not of course a strictly Greek phenomenon, as Tsakiris notes (2004: 233). Its intensity in Greece is related to the historical conditions of the emergence of trade-unions (and particularly to the effort of the state to marginalize the Left), but also to the class structure of society. "Civil society, a part of which is the trade-union movement, was exiguous, permeable by the strategy of parties and the

collective identities and prevalence of liberal values; individualization, heterogeneity and geographical dispersion among workers; limited time available to workers (related to the high average total working time). Internal factors refer to inability to attract new members coming from new fields of employment; intensity of conflict within the trade-union movement; decrease of efficiency; lack of union presence in workplace (Kouzis 2007: 63-89; Palaiologos 2006: 214; Kapsalis 2012: 6).

¹¹² In the trade-union structure, there are two national confederations, 253 federal organizations and more than 5000 local ones, 119 branch federations and 134 "labour centres" in different regions (Nikolaou 2011). In the 33rd GSEE conference in 2007, 472,304 members were represented, from 74 federations and 83 labour centres, with 2,425 grassroots unions. In the 32nd ADEDY conference in 2004, 289,469 members were represented, from 46 federations, with 1,260 grassroots unions (Kouzis 2007: 101-114).

¹¹³ The level of unionization is 18% in the private sector and 65% in the public and broader public sector. This is reflected in the composition of the leading bodies of the confederations: 122 out of the 130 members of the executive bodies of both GSEE and ADEDY, are employed in the public sector and only 8 in the private one (Nikolaou 2012). This reality follows the quasi-universal pattern of the trade-union movement since the 1970s in the world, and particularly in Europe.

¹¹⁴ More specifically, 97% of enterprises employing up to 20 employees (Katsoridas 2008: 143).

¹¹⁵ There are also unions in which the Left is the only active political force (the so-called "red unions", mainly affiliated to the KKE).

state, unable to a great degree to build its own self-managed and self-organized institutions and organizations” (Ibid.)

These tendencies, along with weaknesses in the internal structure and functioning of trade-unions, affected their effectiveness and their relationships with workers. This is, in large part, due to bureaucratization, but is also related to the failure to develop democratic structures for participation and information. Indicatively, according to the 2008 EKA/VPRC research, 52% of participants claimed to be informed about union processes through the media, and only 22% from unions themselves. As for bureaucratization, union bureaucracy has been a historical factor of labour movement, established by the dominant class via venality and the conferring of privileges. In addition, changes in the legal framework have become a deterrent and obstruction to the founding and proper functioning of unions¹¹⁶. This tendency is reinforced by the fact that union density is directly related to the size of the company (Vernardakis, Mayreas and Patronis 2007: 15), thus creating an environment hindering union organization in the majority of workplaces in Greece. However, it should be noted that, before the current crisis, Greece had some of the strictest employment protection legislation amongst the OECD countries, including legislation relating to temporary employment, high employer social security contributions, implicit permanent job status for the vast majority of public servants, constraints on hiring and firing policies, and national collective agreements signed by confederations and employer associations (Kretsos 2011: 265). It also had some of the most pro-union legislation, with relatively few restrictions on strike activity and institutions such as arbitration and the more favourable clause that played in favour of trade-unionism. This is why the slashing of that legislation was a crucial objective of the memoranda.

Furthermore, trade-unionism is evidently mostly developed in some of the social groups that have constituted its traditional strongholds (men, the elderly, workers on stable employment), but remained clearly more limited in others (the youth, women,

¹¹⁶ In order for a workplace to become unionized, the founding statement must be signed by at least 21 employees. In the Greek context, where most employment is provided by small businesses, this makes unionization very difficult, if not impossible, especially since one of the main features of wage labour is its wide dispersion in small businesses (see footnote 114).

precarious workers, immigrants, the unemployed) (Kouzis 2007: 46, 85-7; Palaiologos 2006: 158-66; Vernardakis, Mayreas and Patronis 2007: 12). The growth in unemployment has exacerbated this problem since union organization and membership among the unemployed is extremely low; in addition, legal restrictions apply to their participation (Palaiologos 2006: 167, 185). With regard to the age factor, as Vernardakis, Mayreas and Patronis have aptly noted, the social basis of trade-unionism is in an “aging phase” (2007: 15). Finally, traditional trade-unionism in Greece has often been hostile to the development of mobilizing practices and to the escalation of labour conflicts. On several occasions, it has even been hostile to the demands formulated by workers¹¹⁷. There is of course a reciprocity in this attitude, since labour protests have often turned against the trade-union confederations, accusing them of “political inertia, party conciliation and a consensus/compromise strategy towards the government and employers, when ruthless and aggressive attacks imposes a more radical orientation” (Kapsalis 2012: 21). This attitude of rejection of traditional trade-unionism has been evident during the strike movement of 2010-2011.

As a result of all the above tendencies, trade-union representation seriously eroded in the years before the crisis. This is illustrated by the constant decline in union density, as well as in the declining level of trust for trade-unions among the general public. According to the 2008 EKA/VPRC research for the Attica region, 52% of all workers stated that no union existed at their workplace, only 27% stated they were a member of any union (37% in 1997)¹¹⁸, whilst unionization rates among younger workers were even lower (7% in the age category 18 to 24) (EKA/VPRC 2008: 110). In certain social categories, the situation was even worse: only 5% of the unemployed and of immigrant workers maintained an organizational relationship with unions at their workplace (Vernardakis, Mayreas and Patronis 2007: 15). In private sector enterprises,

¹¹⁷ The GSEE was the first institution to announce the foundation of a private (non-state) university when the movement in higher education, lead by students and staff was fighting against the revision of the Greek Constitution which prohibited such a move. Furthermore, the GSEE itself subcontracted its cleaning service to a private company when the main cleaners' union was protesting about the practices of such companies in the sector.

¹¹⁸ In the 2008 INE-GSEE/VPRC research, 35% of wage labourers in the public sector and 82% of those in the private sector stated not being members of any union. The figures for 2010 are 38% and 77% respectively (INE-GSEE/VPRC 2008; INE-GSEE/VPRC 2010).

only 2% of the employees were covered by collective representation (Kapsalis 2012: 6). Lack of union support imposes severe limitations on participation in forms of protest: Only 9% of the non-unionized claimed to have participated in strikes, whilst, in terms of union effectiveness, 56% of the participants stated their feeling that unions were ineffective (EKA/VPRC 2008: 123), and 57-60% indicated having a lack of confidence in them (EKA/VPRC 2008: 126).

Regarding this last point (public perception of unionism), several researchers found evidence of a deep mistrust. In the 2000 VPRC/GSEE research on wage labourers, the relative majority (40%) of respondents were neither union members nor did they trust their way of functioning, although they did recognize the necessity of their existence in principle. Only 8% claimed to be completely hostile towards them, rejecting both the possibility of joining and their sheer necessity. 18% were dissatisfied, despite being union members, but without trusting or considering them as necessary, while 17% trusted unions without being members. Only 16% were both members and trusted unions. In the 2008 research, 44% of union members and 53% of the total participants put no trust in trade-unions in terms of solving their problems (in 2010, the respective figures were 65% and 77%) (INE-GSEE/VPRC 2008; INE-GSEE/VPRC 2010)¹¹⁹. In certain workplaces with high union density, this mistrust is also broadly identified¹²⁰. However, in the EKA/VPRC 2008 research, answering a more general question (*“are unions necessary for workers?”*), only 10% responded negatively, and 82% recognized the need for their existence. It is therefore difficult to affirm that trade-unionism has declined as such in the popular perception. Indeed, especially after the large scale and successful protests against the restructuring of the insurance and pension system in 2001¹²¹, the previous decline in the frequency of strikes was reversed (Katsoridas and Labousaki 2012: 87). Those strikes, up to the 2010-2011

¹¹⁹ The problem is even larger in the youth: its participation in unions is 4% for those aged 18-24, 20% for those aged 25-34 and then growing for those above that age (Kouzis 2011a: 179).

¹²⁰ In ELTA, 49.2% of the workers belonging to unions did not trust them, while in banks the respective percentage was 56% and in OTE was 68% (Vernardakis, Mayreas and Patronis 2007: 13).

¹²¹ In which hundreds of thousands protesters took part, and strike participation rates approached 100% in the public sector and 75% in the private sector in two one-day strikes, in April 26 and May 17, 2001.

period and as a result of the special circumstances that prevailed in the 2000s', were mostly about defending existing rights and gains rather than demanding new ones.

f. Specific features in the emergence of social protest

The crisis in the trade-union movement in Greece is not merely a reflection of one (or more) moments of its history, but one of its constitutive elements, almost from its start. As mentioned, the development of the Greek labour and of the trade-union movement was confronted with two main difficulties. On the one hand, the Greek state has basically been hostile to trade-unionism and to collective action, striving to denigrate, undermine and finally repress and eliminate it (with the particular exception of the 1980s', when a somehow different strategy was employed, as examined above)¹²². While, on the other hand, it had to contend with a number of structural difficulties related to the particularities of class structure, the fragmentation of workforce and the specific features of the trade-union movement itself. The preponderance of small businesses and of high levels of mobility in employment has militated against participation in trade-unions, whilst simultaneously hampering secondary-level organization as well. The slow development of wage labour has had a negative influence on its organization, in parallel with the specifics of the distribution of workers across productive sectors and types of business. A significant indicator of the nature of the problems is the fact that more than 30% of wage labourers have only been tied to wage labour for only up to three generations, with evident consequences for workers' ideology and culture. As Lytras emphasizes, "trade-union movements in general, as a type of organization of class-demarcated social groups, bear all problems of their class identification, as developed first and foremost through the diversity and/or fragmentation of their productive integration and organization" (1993: 222).

¹²² This is not generally the case in European parliamentary regimes. Very often, a subdued-bureaucratic form of trade-unionism is more effective as a form of control than any repressive policy, at least at a state level; the way employers deal with the trade-union issue is another matter. For the Greek case and state interventionism, see the work of (Seferiades 1998; Seferiades 2005; Koukoules 1995; Vernardakis and Mavris 1986).

Major changes in legislation and the hardening of the institutions of the state that has been accompanied by a lowering of the status accorded to unions, have damaged the ability of labour and unions to engage in an effective struggle for workers' rights. This tendency, examined in detail in chapter II, was reinforced by the diffusion of the ideological concept, ruthlessly promoted over the last years, of "unproductive unions", which have allegedly become irrelevant in the "post-industrial age" (Kouzis 2011b). This ideological framework has presented trade-unions as obsolete and redundant constructions from the past, lacking any real representativeness, as a force ostensibly antithetical to human autonomy (Palaiologos 2006: 249). Changes in working conditions and relations, and especially the growth of flexible working patterns have further abetted the forces eroding the basis of unionization. The strategies deployed by the employers to create fragmentation and division among workers at both the ideological and the social levels (turning social groups against each other, devaluing the idea of collectivity in workplaces etc.) also pushed strongly in the same direction. Decline of trade-union membership and the consequent undermining of the status of trade-unions in industrial relations has inevitably resulted in a significant increase in income inequality¹²³.

From a more dialectical perspective, these structural difficulties and the related paradigm shift are not simply an objective process but also a consequence of the failure of trade-unions to represent these rapidly expanding layers. According to Castells, what emerges from the observation of the huge organizational changes of the last two decades of 20th century is not a new, "better", mode of production, but a crisis in the old one (Castells 2000: 179). The same applies to the trade-union movement that reacted against the imposition of a neoliberal model. Instead of employing organizers involved in social movements to extend trade-unionism into more socially oriented movements (campaigns, direct and participatory democracy etc.), union leaders have tried to "ride out" the crisis by adopting a scientifically documented but purely technocratic discourse in place of the more politicized one of the past (Soros

¹²³ Participation in trade-unions is an important factor of reducing inequality (Dafermos and Papatheodorou 2010: 32, 40).

n.d.). Thus, for example, they have adopted the dominant narrative on “growth”, and they have identified employers, employees and the State as (equal) partners who cooperate for the sake of the national economy. Adopting this strategy, at a moment when the existing welfare state structures were under collapse, has been counterproductive in terms of union membership and public trust (Seferiades 1999; Dedousopoulos 2007). Further, it was a deliberate political choice, linked to the direct connection of trade-unions to the state. This is reminiscent of Balibar's claim that in certain cases, depending on the correlation of forces, trade-union organization may be compatible with, or even an organic aspect of, capitalist relations (Balibar 2014: 195). As Agnoli has noted (1972: 93), the most effective parliamentary domestication of the opposition is achieved when the capital-labour conflict is mitigated by trade-unions oriented towards social “partnership”.

Certain sectors or currents within trade-unions have tried to surmount these difficulties. One such attempt was the creation of union structures across employment sectors, linking rather than separating individual workplaces. However these attempts have also proven inadequate in providing a strong enough pattern to ensure the unity and coherence of the entire working class (Lytras 1993: 217). This adverse reality has inevitably changed and compromised the structures and forms of organization of trade-unionism. Nevertheless, new organizational forms outside the conventional boundaries of traditional trade-unionism have emerged. As Lytras has underlined (1993: 239), “during the more critical phases of development of assertive struggles, flexible organizational forms emerge, characterized by initiative-based, original and efficient constitution, generally in correspondence to the degree of sectoral and local participation and the intensity of problems and demands. These formulations are manifested as either a synthesis of specific organizational schemata -usually secondary organizations- more or less loose, or as the conjunctural collaboration of local associations of grassroots unions, lacking the recognition of superior organizations”¹²⁴.

¹²⁴ Examples of such forms are the several coalitions formed among them (SEO-115 in 1962, “Initiative of grassroots unions in the private and public sector” in 2009 etc.)

Grassroots syndicalism, which played an important role during the crisis, has its origins in the 2000s'. Many grassroots unions were founded at this time, filling the void left by the gradual withering and irrelevance of traditional unionism¹²⁵. These unions have made a qualitatively interesting contribution in building a new perspective for the trade-union movement, despite their limited, initially even marginal, political weight. Initially, these unions had been intensely politicized, and represented particular political currents (mainly the anticapitalist Left and anarchist currents). All of them despite not following the same practices (some employ activist forms of protest, others focus on more traditional repertoires of trade-unionism) share a number of common features. The December 2008 revolt was a milestone in this process. The cancellation by the GSEE of an announced protest, a decision which became a symbol of class collaboration, and its actual staging by grassroots unions, the occupation of the GSEE offices by rebellious workers and the formation of a coalition of grassroots unions after the murderous assault on Kostantina Kuneva (a trade-unionist in the cleaning sector), marked three decisive moments in this process. This period led up to the forming of the "Initiative of grassroots unions in the private and the public sector" (hereafter mentioned as the "Initiative"). It was the first time grassroots unions coordinated to mobilize and organize large scale actions outside the auspices of the national confederations GSEE-ADEDY¹²⁶.

The scope of action of these forms embraces both exerting pressure on official trade-unions, and forming new, emergent, forms of labour politics. Examples of these forms are certain grassroots unions, whose role in the social protests of the 2010-2011 period will be examined in section b of chapter IV. Their main characteristics are: (1) they organize predominantly at the inter-professional level; (2) their emphasis lies on their differentiation from the respective official or bureaucratic forms, on solidarity and

¹²⁵ Five such initiatives have been central to this: SMT, SYBXA, SBEOD, SSM and SEFK. See the field work of (Kretsos 2011), following the activities of SYBXA, expressing to an extent the logic of all these initiatives.

¹²⁶ As has already been noted, the union movement in Greece has been relatively unified organizationally. The Communist Party has founded a separate "autonomous centre", PAME, constituted by unions which tend to be "red unions", without any real autonomy, following decisions actually taken by party instances. However, the KKE and the unions participating in PAME still operate within the GSEE structures.

the universality of protest against corporatist functions and on rank-and-file activism; (3) they pursue or emphasize the inclusion of workers under flexible relations and contract workers, in contrast to existing trade-unions; (4) they use new technologies and the social media to provide alternative information; (5) they put emphasis on issues of democracy and organization. Despite these organizations exhibiting all the characteristics of “social movement unionism”, as defined by Moody (1997), a number of weaknesses and problems have also arisen, the main ones being: (1) their organization at a partial, sectoral or business level, which results in fragmentary constitutions and in limiting their scope; (2) their difficulty in coordination processes; (3) their contradiction between the need to represent larger strata (thus based on more elementary properties of protest and solidarity), and the need to employ more advanced repertoires of action (thus less universal) because of government and employers' aggressive policy towards them; (4) general functional problems¹²⁷; (5) the structural limits of flexible work and unemployment impacting on political participation; and (6) their weak financial bases and lack of resources.

Seen from another perspective, social movements are not restricted to workplaces; class struggle occurs in areas outside the production sphere, and includes all those aspects that resist the expansion of capitalist politics and strategies. In advanced capitalism, broader fields of everyday life beyond merely labour are commercialized and integrated into capitalist relations and market mechanisms; this process being far from a new one, constitutes a structural dimension of the capitalist mode of production (Harvey 1982; Lefebvre 1968; Benjamin 1999), creating a new field for social mobilization and protest. The scope of urban space is indeed another field where capitalist relations are constituted and reproduced. As Harvey points out, this process is directly linked to the reality in the workplaces: what comes out of it is “a very different kind of proletariat... characterized by insecurity, by episodic, temporary and spatially diffuse employment, and [which] is very difficult to organize on a workplace basis”

¹²⁷ For Vogiatzoglou, “a major challenge the grassroots unions need to surmount, is how to maintain a high degree of internal democracy whilst consolidating a wide and flexible inter-union organization” (Vogiatzoglou 2014: 9).

(Harvey 2013: 130). This process doesn't provide a substitute to the mobilization at the workplace: it rather suggests the need for a broader coordination, which should include the organization of the working class at a local level as well as experiments with other forms of community organization (Triantafyllopoulou and Sayas 2012: 17). Such an approach will be further studied later, when examining the appearance of several forms of urban and local mobilizations related to particular spaces and identities.

By stressing the importance of urban space and the potentialities it offers to the development of movements, the Greek case offers an example of "how a social movement's urban character can contribute to making it a potential threat to the national political and economic order" (Arampatzi and Nicholls 2012: 2592). The centrality of the squares is characteristic of this tendency in the 2010-2011 social protests in Greece. The authors' argument consists of three points: firstly, the implementation of neoliberal policies in the 1990s' made the traditional tools for blocking resistance (clientelism and repression) inadequate for exercising control over multiple urban resistances. Secondly, these resistances were the sites in which diverse activists transcended their individualities or concrete spaces and connected with others over issues about their common lived space. Thirdly, parallel affiliations of activists with organizations and networks across the country functioned as "brokers" between local mobilizations and the wider social movement space. These urban mobilizations are not seen as geographically and conceptually "trapped in the city", as if urban space were the end point of concrete protests. On the contrary, by studying the unique role of the city to movement development, movements become involved with issues beyond the city, triggering relational processes (Ibid.: 2592-3). Thus, people are mobilized for a contemporary "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1968)¹²⁸, which includes fundamental human rights: housing, decent work, education, health and quality of life. According to Purcell, "Lefebvre's right to the city is not a suggestion for reform, nor does it envision a fragmented, tactical, or piecemeal resistance. His idea is instead a call for a radical

¹²⁸ Although this right needs to refer to the concrete context, since Harvey is right to note that this concept is often "an empty signifier; everything depends on who gets to fill it with meaning" (2013: xv).

restructuring of social, political, and economic relations, both in the city and beyond” (Purcell 2002: 101).

Thus, reclaiming the city is directly linked to reclaiming the social and political scene (Triantafyllopoulou and Sayas 2012: 8). Seen from that perspective, “the spatial context does not undermine the prevailing role of social relations, on the contrary it contributes to this direction, because it furthers the understanding of how social groups give particular meaning to certain places, and also how specific place-based narratives are constructed” (Poulios et al. 2013: 4). In Soja's words (2000: 9), “all social relations, whether they are linked to class, family, community, market, or state power, remain abstract and ungrounded until they are specifically spatialized, that is, made into material and symbolic spatial relations”¹²⁹.

To conclude, many scholars have emphasized that traditional trade-unions must broaden their scope and transform themselves to embrace these different forms of protests (indicatively, Papadopoulos 1987: 242; Katsoridas 2008: 148; Kouzis 2007: 85- 7; Palaiologos 2006: 380-81). Others have argued in favour of the obsolescence of trade-unions, claiming that movements should rely on entirely new forms of organization. Both these perspectives fail, in my view, to properly understand the fundamental functions of trade-unions. Our hypothesis is that the transformations in social relations lead to the emergence of new forms, which, by their nature, have to develop outside the limitations of traditional unions and of union representation (such structures have indeed emerged in Greece during the crisis, to be studied in the next chapter). However, these new forms should not be seen as being in inevitable conflict with more traditional forms of organization, including trade-unions; rather, in coordination. As Stratoulis (Stratoulis 1987: 10) underlines, “We cannot ignore 'old' forms of exploitation. Capitalism's development is not so much accompanied by the substitution of 'old' forms by 'new' ones, but by the supplementation of the first ones to the seconds, through modernization or mutation of the old into new forms”. The

¹²⁹ It seems interesting to note at this point that, etymologically, the word “politics” itself comes from the word “polis” (from the ancient Greek “kratos-polis”/State-city), meaning the political facet of living place (Babiniotis 2003).

neoliberalist transformations at the economic and the political level, although radically aggravating the terms of social integration, also create the possibility of new unifications.

Thus, the challenge for these new structures (both these referring to the organization of labour in a different way than the traditional trade-unionism and these which organize at the level of “spatial politics”) is to deal with the need for coordination, joint action and cohesion, in order to be a force for unification of the exploited. This is actually referring to the well-known schema of “unity in diversity”, as an attempt at unification into a collective subversive force which transcends its internal contradictions, while still recognizing the relative autonomy of the different forms. In this process however, the political specificity of the organized industrial working class must not be superficially underestimated. Further, the challenge lies in the reconciliation of the differences at the subjective level (Marias n.d.: 34). This process of constituting a collective subjectivity does not, on its own, necessarily induce the construction of new, unified social bodies. It is rather about new forms of coordination and interaction, based on common practices and mutually in conflict with dominant policies (Stavrides 2011: 180). Thus, the connections that are formed are not based on solidarity alone, but on concrete common interests, demands and practices of protest. In Greece amid the crisis, such forms emphasizing novelty and direct participation, in parallel to more central forms of social movement, have emerged during the crisis, and will now be examined, under this perspective.

CHAPTER IV: THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT IN GREECE IN 2010-2011

“A moment is not only a vanishing point in time. It is also a momentum: the weight that tips the scales, producing a new balance or imbalance, an effective reframing of what the 'common' means, a reconfiguration of the universe of the possible” (Ranciere 2010: 173)

The first organized reaction in Greece against the economic, social and political reality was the youth revolt of December 2008¹³⁰. This movement was also the first organized expression of the need for new ways of exercising politics. Less than two years later, Greece's subjection to the “Troika mechanism” in April 2010 and the brutal implementation of memoranda policies were accompanied by a vigorous burst of social mobilization. A week after the announcement of signing up of the Memorandum by the MP George Papandreou, hundreds of thousands participated in one of the biggest protests in Greek history, the day of the general strike called by the GSEE on May 5, 2010. During the winter and spring 2010, important mobilizations had been organized, mostly by strikes called by the two trade-union confederations GSEE and ADEDY (on February 10 and 24, on March 5 and 11, and tens of sectoral strikes). However, the entry into the “Troika mechanism” and the implementation of the memorandum policies brought the range and intensity of mobilization to a whole new level.

The period chosen for the present study spans from April 2010 to the end of 2011, when the first cycle of mobilizations peaked with the two-day general strike of 19-20 October and the disruption by crowds of protesters of the official festivities of the national day of October 28¹³¹. This period includes: (1) a significant wave of general

¹³⁰ The December 2008 revolt is not within the scope of the current work, but was the main topic of my MA thesis (see Gaitanou 2011a).

¹³¹ Indeed, many researchers have identified this period as a distinctive phase of social mobilization. Tsakiris and Koumandaraki describe a similar perspective when noting that this first period is “characterized by the mass reactions of the people against the first Memorandum that culminates with

strikes; (2) the “movement of the squares” of May-June 2011, during which two huge strikes were held (on June 15 and June 28-29); (3) various forms of civil disobedience (the most important being the “I won't pay” movement, which called to refuse the payment of fees for public services, specifically road tolls but also bus fares and hospital services), local protest movements (the most important being the Keratea rebellion, where residents of the Attica region blocked the construction of a waste treatment centre); and the disruption of the official parades of October 28, 2011 all over Greece to protest against austerity measures.

In the present chapter, I will examine the specific features of the social movement that developed during the first phase following the start of the “shock therapy” imposed to Greece by Troika rule. The first section will be devoted to some preliminary remarks on the rebellious cycle, presenting the interpretative framework that will be followed. The next section will be devoted to the study of the wave of strikes, with a particular focus on the limitations of the trade-union movement (as already examined in chapter III) and the emergence of new forms and structures within the labour movement. In the third section, I will analyze the movement of the squares during the spring and the summer of 2011, and more particularly the conditions of its emergence, its specific features, its structures and its political character. The fourth section will examine the other forms of the social movement of this period and the last one will examine the overall perspective of these mobilizations in relation to our main interest, i.e. their potential for expressing a new form of politicization and a different perception of the political.

the movement of the Indignados and the occupation of Constitution Square in front of the Parliament in Athens and the squares of cities throughout Greece. This period was also characterized by the manifestation of acts of civil disobedience, mass protests, the general strikes, the actions of the new labour unions of people with precarious employment, and the riots provoked by the repressive apparatus of the state” (Tsakiris and Koumandaraki 2015: 16). I will proceed below on the particular characteristics that make this phase in my perspective distinctive.

a. The social movement as a whole: The rebellious cycle of 2010-2011.

The protests that have emerged in Greece in the first period of the crisis will be evaluated in a comparative perspective, as part of the “social movement in general”, in the sense the term was defined in chapter I, and in relation to a concrete question: political participation and its effect on consciousness transformation. This research focuses on Greece as a highly specific case: crucially different but still part of the bigger picture, amid the crisis that has spread throughout Europe and the world. Thus, I don't embrace a view according to which all movements that occurred worldwide in 2011 are part of a single “global movement”¹³². On the contrary, I will argue that, despite the elements of diffusion and resonance, the objective and subjective specificities of the Greek social formation determined in a singular way the different forms taken by the development of the movement. Of course, this perspective doesn't wish to ignore the commonalities between the various movements (and especially between the movement of the squares in Greece and the Indignados in Spain), nor the common ground of the global crisis which determines their emergence.

It remains however the case that the rebellious cycle of 2010-2011 in Greece had unique features. First of all, it fully deserves to be called a “*rebellious cycle*” due to an exceptional combination of factors: the scale of mobilization¹³³, its diversity, massiveness, decisiveness and radicalism, the escalation of the confrontation, its politicization and the development of forms of self-organization, the rearrangement of social alliances and of political representation and the ruptures it produced¹³⁴. This

¹³² This is the dominant view on these movements, reproduced by the media, the dominant political discourse but also certain scholars (although the latter have been more reluctant to endorse such a view). For example, Oikonomakis and Ross (2013: 6-7) speak of the “Real Democracy Movement”, and the media spoke of “the global protests/movement of 2011”.

¹³³ Adopting the definition established in social movement studies of “mega protests” as those protest events in which over 30.000 people participate, all main events of the period 2010-2011 under examination, were definitely mega protests, with often more than 200.000 participants.

¹³⁴ As for the extent of the mobilization, according to data provided in the parliament by Nikos Dendias, the minister of public order and civil protection, 20,120 gatherings and protests were organized from May 8, 2010 to March 28, 2014, 6,266 were organized in the Attica region. According to Sakellaropoulos, these rates make them the most dynamic mobilizations since the end of the civil war (Sakellaropoulos 2014a: 189).

approach in terms of a “rebellious cycle” is consistent with the concept of the “contentious cycle” as elaborated in the social movement literature. In chapter I, I referred to Tarrow’s definition of the contentious cycle: in its phase of mobilization, the generalization of the conflict opens up new political opportunities, encourages the creation of coalitions between actors and exacerbates instability within the elite. Early demands highlight the vulnerability of authorities, challenge the interests of other contenders and contribute to the creation of new master frames, thus broadening participation and conflict (Psimitis 2011: 191-2). As a result, “an open field of social interaction with multiple actors and completely uncertain outcomes has been produced” (Ibid: 192). This is exactly the case of the 2010-2011 mobilizations in Greece, and this is also why this period will be studied as a new and distinctive, but unified protest cycle.

However, the unity, or rather, unification of these mobilizations should not be assumed too hastily. The fact that these mobilizations were “objectively” part of the same sequence, in the sense that they were related to the specific situation, does not necessarily mean that they constitute a movement conscious of its own unity, that is of a single “subject”. Rather, the unification of movements should be seen as a problem to be solved, not as a given. This dimension appears clearly in the participants’ own reactions and perceptions. To take just one example, which will be examined further below, during the squares movement, forms of organized action (including political organizations and trade-unions) were initially thought as a negative influence on the movement. This perception gradually changed and gave way to a convergence between the squares’ movement and the trade-union contingents, particularly during the general strikes. This convergence requires rigorous analysis. Bearing this in mind, social mobilizations in Greece are part of the “social movement in general”, in the sense of a movement “corresponding to a certain configuration of social protests and of the labour movement itself” (Kouvelakis 2007: 213).

Those mobilizations can be understood as following a strategy of “offensive defense”, alternating different forms and levels of protest in which expanding sections of the population were involved, as Kouvelakis has put it (Kouvelakis 2011a). This is a

process which reaches successive peak stages, with clearly rebellious features, leading to a shift in the balance of forces. This process emerges “from below”, from the logic of the mobilizations themselves, and derives from the fact that the rebellious forms of action tend to be part of every long-range social conflict, signaling the participation of social strata normally considered outside the conventionally defined boundaries of traditional organizational frames. However, at a stage of their development, these forms inevitably come up against certain limits. This point is crucial: the politicization of the movements during that period derives from the fact that the memoranda do not bring a partial change, or a reform, of the terms of the social contract; they attack its very foundations. This attack is both frontal and quasi-general, leaving few sectors of society untouched (except the most privileged ones) thus facilitating the unification of protest. This unification comes initially as a reaction against a common adversary, and this impulse opens up the possibility of a transformative process at the level of consciousness. However, within this process, a strong asymmetry between the two sides remains, with the organizational positions of the subaltern classes severely weakened to the point of paralyzing their capacity to react to the new context.

In terms of the mobilized social subject, this period can be seen as having a potential for a “unity in diversity” pattern to materialize. Diverse social strata and categories participated from different, yet relevant, starting points, including groups very far from being the “usual suspects” with whom social movement activists are used to get interactions. These “usual suspects” include, at the political level, (over)politicized segments of the population (mainly attached to the radical Left and to activism in general), and essentially the youth at the level of social layers. To elaborate briefly on this last point, the youth has traditionally played an important role in social mobilizations in Greece, and the student movement, particularly after November 1973 insurrection against the dictatorship and the Metapolitefsi. The specific role of the educational institutions¹³⁵, the particular characteristics of young age, an underlying

¹³⁵ As seen in chapters II and III, education was perceived as a key means of upward social mobility and financial security by the popular classes.

radicalism and the objective conditions in higher education have contributed to an important development of student protests, which have often managed to block attempted reforms¹³⁶. The student movement of 2006-2007 in particular has been the most important in the recent years. It was partly successful and produced a model of mobilization and a cohort of young activists rather different than what existed before: a militant type, determined to fight, with very strong commitments of being united in struggle and solidarity¹³⁷. This type of militancy had a “spill over” effect on broader layers of the youth and an important impact on the mobilizations that emerged during the crisis, both in terms of physical presence and of forms of action. However, the mobilizations which will be studied in this thesis have not been mobilizations of the youth but of a much wider part of the society. In this wider part, young people participated more as individuals, lacking a common identity, an organizational form, and a common consciousness which would have been distinctive of the youth as such. One of the consequences of this relative absence was that the dominant perception in Greece, that activism should be left to the young, collapsed.

What replaced it was the recognition of the participation of a much broader spectrum of society, contributing to the scale, effectiveness and social legitimation of these protests. This is evidenced by data from the beginning of the period discussed here. In a poll conducted in May 2010, there are interesting elements about the degree of dissatisfaction and the social layers supporting the protests. There is an almost universal awareness that the measures will affect people's lives, something supported by 91% of the participants. Two thirds of participants totally opposed the measures

¹³⁶ The most important ones have been the victorious school and university occupations in 1991, during which the murdered professor, Nikos Temponeras, became a symbol of the youth movements; the high-school and university student movement in 1997-98 against the “Arsenis law” which changed the path of entry into universities; and finally, the student movement in 2006-2007 against a law amending the functioning of universities’ and against the revision of the Constitution to authorize private universities. We could also briefly mention the university occupations in 1979 against the law 815, the mobilizations against respective laws in 1982 and 1987 and those in 1995 and the university occupations in 2001. Actually, each time a reform was proposed by government potentially changing the character of high education in a neoliberal direction, students vigorously opposed it.

¹³⁷ This reality is identified by protesters themselves: during one of my interviews, the participant criticized her own lack of politicization in the past by arguing that: *“I am not a child who studied in the Greek university, I came from a protected family environment, I studied abroad, I was a confused, apolitical person... Now I have completely changed. I think that my friends who studied in Greek universities, got this politicization at some point during their studies. I did not. I started getting it during the December 2008 revolt”* (I31).

while 77% thought of them as unfair, percentages which are astonishing considering this is in the start of the period, and the effects of the measures were yet to be evident in people's lives. In terms of class orientation, 57% of participants thought that the measures are intended to satisfy big capital, while social acceptance of mobilizations also cut across class criteria: those rejecting them most aggressively were private sector (77%) and public sector employees (78%), the unemployed (73%) and students (75%). Finally, a significant 39% stated their willingness to take part in protests, increasing in relation to level of education, more intense in ages 25-55, and in those positioning themselves on the Left (Public Issue 2010).

The rebellious processes discussed here constituted forms of protest that challenged, prevented and disrupted consent to the existing social order, and the management of social contradictions by the state. They thus manifested a crisis of hegemony, the failure of a successful articulation and coordination of interests within the state¹³⁸. At the same time, any expectation of partial settlements, moderate treatments, "productive/creative" reforms and social, institutional consultation practices, faded away. Neither the state allowed the emergence of such expectations, nor could the affected majorities find any realistic path to satisfy their aspirations by adopting this intermediate path. The impossibility to reach a solution of compromise led to the exacerbation of a *sui generis* authoritarianism, as discussed in chapter II. This authoritarian turn progressively impacted into the consciousness of the people, catalyzed by the display of the particular form of intransigence exhibited by the state and the police against popular protest. This has intensified popular frustration and a sense of political deadlock and has spurred people into seeking new ways of expressing themselves politically.

After the pivotal mobilization of February 12, 2012, when the second memorandum was passed in the parliament and tens of thousands of people went onto the streets in combative and mass protests, the social movement has entered a new phase. This

¹³⁸ This crisis of hegemony includes the inability of the dominant class to persuade the dominated masses that its particular, selfish interests are the interests of the nation as a whole, ie. identified with social interest, at least in the long-term.

break does not signal the end of the cycle of mobilizations. However, the two-year period of 2010-2011 marked a first phase, with certain common characteristics, especially in respect to consciousness formation and transformation through political participation. The period that followed, from spring 2012 until the new general elections in early 2015, was dominated by a shift in the terrain of confrontation and in the type of expectations towards the parliamentary level. This shift culminated in the double elections of May-June 2012. During the two-and-a-half year period that followed, the socio-economic situation worsened significantly as a direct consequence of the implementation of the memoranda. The activity of social movements seemed to have reached an ebb, although certain important protests did develop in specific social sectors (mostly against the closure of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), in the youth and education sectors, in parts of the public sector and in Skouries town in Chalkidiki against the gold mines). This evolution will be briefly investigated in the Conclusions, after the presentation of the research on the 2010-2011 social protests.

b. The waves of strikes¹³⁹.

The main features of the labour and trade-union movement in Greece have been discussed in chapter III. To sum up, the role of trade-unionism during the current crisis has been in retreat. As Kapsalis notes, “legislative interventions have been so numerous and so crucial that, compared to the framework that was valid until early 2010, very few features remain today unchanged” (Kapsalis 2012: 11). The primary thrust of this spate of new legislation has been to eviscerate the concept of collective bargaining and representation and relegate the labour contract to an individual level. Concurrently, trade-union leaders have been confronted with false dilemmas, which,

¹³⁹ For this section, the interviews I conducted with cadres of the trade-union movement have been decisive in deepening my understanding of its mode of functioning, its limitations and its mistakes. More specifically, I have conducted two personal interviews and one group interview (with three trade-unionists). I would like to thank Giorgos Charisis (unionist in POE-OTA, member of the Executive Secretary of ADEDY and secretary of META), Despoina Spanou (former vice president of ADEDY and member of the General Council of META), and Stavi Saloufakou (former president of EKA), Metaxia Stekoulea (President of OIYE) and Panagiotis Kouloumparitsis (deputy Secretary-General of EKA), all three being founding members of EMEIS.

within a depressed context in the labour market, left them with little room to maneuver. The gradual undermining of the combative sectors of the trade-union movement has exacerbated the crisis of their identity and role, especially at a time when government policies have been directed at restricting their institutional functioning, making consensual approaches both inappropriate and ineffective. The framework of social partnership has been further weakened and lost even its secondary role (Ibid.: 9-11). The target of this strategy goes beyond the weakening of the trade-union movement. Its wider objectives aim at a further erosion of social rights through the dismantling of any potential mechanism for collective response on the part of labour (Ibid.: 15). The governmental strategy has thus been twofold: surprise attack and the misrepresentation and smearing of the trade-union movement.

This governmental attack on the labour movement, combined with the effects of the economic depression, had a debilitating effect on the organized labour movement, and damaged its ability to respond to the challenges of this period. It is true, as we will see below, that this two-year period culminated in a wave of strikes, numerous mobilizations, with thousands of protesters taking to the streets and occupying workplaces. However, the trade-union movement has failed to rise to the situation. It was a historical moment when the old configuration of the movement was confronted with its inherent limitations. Its crisis deepened and created the political space for the emergence of new forms, combined with some important problems for the whole movement. To sum up the findings provided by the literature on the subject and by the interviews conducted with some of the cadres of the trade-union movement, also confirmed by my research presented in chapter III and my fieldwork presented in chapter V, the salient problems of the trade-union movement can be presented as follows¹⁴⁰: (1) a particularly low level of participation of workers in the unions, contributing to their irrelevance and ineffectiveness during the crisis; (2) low rates of participation and control of workers themselves in the functioning of trade-unions; (3) the pervasive corruption among trade-union cadres arising from their connections to

¹⁴⁰ All these points were emphasized by all the interviewed cadres of the trade-union movement, independently of their particular political affiliation.

political parties, the state and the employers. This corruption led them to a try to assuage the movement and mollify confrontational disposition of the workers instead of seizing the opportunity to escalate the movement¹⁴¹; (4) the adoption of a strategy that led to fragmentation among workers. This was also one of the main strategies of the state and the dominant class during the crisis: to turn private sector workers against those of the public sector, one sector against another etc. The union bureaucracy actively colluded in this approach which resulted in the fracturing of the bonds of solidarity¹⁴²; (5) a divisive tactics among unions, in relation to differences regarding their combative or alternatively consensual orientation; (6) the impact of coercion and threats at workplaces and the prevalence of antidemocratic methods on the side of the employers, discouraging workers' participation; (7) the weight of structural problems related to precarious work, unemployment, and the specific structure of the economy enervating union ability to mount mobilizations¹⁴³.

Thus, the union bureaucracy, which in the past rested on broad consensus and indeed had previously been able to bring certain improvements for large layers of workers (though not for all of them, and often favouring some against others), now became incapable of performing this role. While union bureaucratic elites bore significant responsibility for this deadlock, they have proven to be remarkably resilient and managed to retain their positions in union elections, especially in the GSEE despite the deep crisis of political representation¹⁴⁴. The main reasons for this resilience were the relatively low union density and increased bureaucratization, but also the

¹⁴¹ The interviewed unionists have labeled the union bureaucracy as “the arm of the state” or as “controlled by the employers”. These expressions are often used in Greece, but of course of greater significance when used by members of unions' administrations themselves.

¹⁴² This was strongly emphasized by all unionists during our interviews. As a result, workers in supposedly safer environments (public sector, certain sectors with vested rights) participated less or separately, feeling reassured that their rights would be least affected. This salami-slicing practice was evident during the mobilizations of certain sectors throughout this period. As denounced by the interviewed unionists, whenever a sector started a protest or a strike, the GSEE leadership would try to delegitimize it by repeating such arguments against workers (on several occasions: in the DEH strike against property taxes, in the strikes against privatization in transport, in the strikes in ALTER TV channel, at Hellenic Steel, in banks, or in small enterprises to be shut down etc).

¹⁴³ Such limitations were related to a misguided theoretical approach about the causes of the crisis by union bureaucracy. The crisis was thought to be mainly a problem of public expenditure, which led to demanding the limitation of state benefits and privileges. This orientation has also had important impact on fragmentation among workers.

¹⁴⁴ Thus, according to the results of the last General Congress of GSEE (March 2013), PASKE (linked to PASOK) held 19 seats, DAKE (linked to Nea Dimokratia) 11, PAME (linked to KKE) 10, AP (linked to SYRIZA) 5, and EMEIS (dissidents of PASKE) 3 seats. Thus the union fraction affiliated with the parties of PASOK and Nea Dimokratia held a clear majority of 30 out of 45 seats (Vogiatzoglou 2014: 4).

perception developed in the more combative unions that, due to the weaknesses of the trade-union movement, it was preferable to remain at a distance from its official structure. Corruption, the prevalence of corporate interests and of antidemocratic practices (even direct or indirect malpractice in elections¹⁴⁵), the development of clientelism in the re-election of trade-union officials, as well as the distance separating grassroots organizations from federations, have also played their part. The biased rules of representation across sectors, over-representing sectors with little effective contact with workers, should be also mentioned¹⁴⁶. This resilience of the union bureaucracy in union elections has declined, since the Left has constantly increased its representation, mainly in grassroots and federal organizations but also, to a limited extent, in the confederations, but definitely not at the pace that effective political representation has been disintegrating in other fields.

This newly emerging reality has led to a major collapse in the credibility of the trade-union movement across a broad portion of the workforce. Of course, a distinction between different levels of organization is necessary. The above remark applies mainly to the level of the confederations, and particularly the GSEE. The civil servant confederation ADEDY should be distinguished to some degree, due to the existence of a different, and more combative tradition in the core of the public sector. Vested rights still remain, and organizational processes are more democratic, leading to a more direct accountability of the confederation. Memorandum policies targeted first and foremost the public sector, triggering thus more vigorous mobilizations. In addition, unionism in the public sector is easier for workers, since the workforce is less subjected to intimidation and to the threat of redundancies. Thus, the ADEDY often adopted more political demands, such as the public auditing of the debt and its non-payment. Other

¹⁴⁵ Conferences to elect leaderships are conducted every three years, with the last two being held in 2010 and 2013. In the latter (2013), representatives from the unions were elected up to three years (!) prior to the conference and thus did not reflect the actual balance of forces at that moment. According to widespread allegations, the followed procedures were often undemocratic, opaque, or even illegitimate. They resulted in staging fake unions, unrepresentative of workers, but represented in the GSEE congresses and other similar practices, multiple voting in union elections, inflating union membership to claim a greater numbers of delegates etc. These practices, far from marginal, had a decisive influence on the outcomes of the GSEE congresses.

¹⁴⁶ We should mention the over-representation of certain sectors, mainly coming from banks, which make almost 40% of the delegates. At the same time, small unions and small workplaces, which form the majority of the Greek economy, are seriously underrepresented, or in some cases totally unrepresented.

sectors have also played a significant role during the two-year period under examination. Individual federations have mounted important strikes, mainly in sectors with a long tradition of mobilization, and having a more clearly working-class oriented class composition. Conflicts also erupted where the dictates of the memorandum impacted directly on workers' vested interests. Such sectors became symbols of the workers' protest, and often contributed to a sense of continuity of the mobilization¹⁴⁷.

This reality led to a resurgence of new forms and structures within the labour movement. The most important ones are the grassroots unions, sharing specific features, which have formed the "Initiative", and have, to some extent, organized outside the GSEE¹⁴⁸. However, as Vogiatzoglou notes, "[organizing] outside GSEE neither means antagonizing it, nor placing oneself outside the organized trade-union movement. Although the PWU [grassroots unions] leaderships' opinions range from a simple political opposition to a total defiance vis-a-vis the Confederation strategies and modus operandi, the vast majority of their entities are participating in the GSEE structures" (Vogiatzoglou 2014: 7). These grassroots unions played a crucial role in the labour movement during the period examined here. As emphasized by K.V., a grassroots union leader participating in the Initiative's assemblies, conducted by Vogiatzoglou (Ibid.: 8): "During the austerity years, the Initiative had a distinct and decisive presence in all the major protests– this includes its participation in all the general strikes, as well as the occupation of Syntagma square, in Athens. Therefore, it is now widely recognized amongst the workers as a pole distinct from the employer-friendly and bureaucratic unionism of GSEE." Tens, occasionally even hundreds, of thousands of protesters participated in protests called by the Initiative, while, the GSEE often failed to mobilize more than a few thousand, sometimes even significantly less. These observations are strongly supported by the interviews I conducted during my fieldwork, which will be presented in the next chapter, and in which three tendencies emerge: a complete lack of respect for the confederations, and particularly GSEE, a

¹⁴⁷ Such examples are: POE-OTA, school caretakers, cleaning women in ministries, administrative staff in universities, school teachers under suspension, OLME etc.

¹⁴⁸ These forms were discussed in more detail in section f of chapter III.

recognition of the positive, though inadequate role of grassroots unions, and a relative adherence to the theoretical necessity of trade-unionism to enable workers to defend their interests.

The first important moment for the labour movement was the strike of May 5 2010, just a few days after the announcement of signing up of the memorandum and the implementation of its first measures. The strike led to a huge street protest in Athens, considered at the time to be the largest of the last 35 years, whilst strike participation reached 90% in most branches of the private sector and 100% in many branches of the public sector (Psimitis 2011: 195). During this protest, three employees died after an attack on a branch of Marfin bank¹⁴⁹. Following this protest and in the ensuing months, despite a second mobilization held on May 20, indecision and hesitation prevailed. Many attributed this reaction to the events linked to the incident in the Marfin bank; however, this conclusion isn't supported by broader research using various sources, nor by our interview-based field research in which participants were specifically asked about the influence of those events on the development of the movement and their participations. Most respondents refused to attribute the way mobilizations evolved to the Marfin incident, and many claimed that, if it had any influence at all, it rather hardened their stance. Nevertheless, a possible unconscious reaction to the trauma associated to the death of the three employees has to be taken into account.

The hesitant mood that prevailed during the last six months of 2010 is mostly attributed to the combination of the effect of the “shock doctrine” of the memoranda, and a “wait and see” reaction on the part of the majority of the public. The full realization of the stakes had yet to sink in. What prevailed was the illusion that the situation would be temporary and its consequences limited. As a result the labour and trade-union movement did not develop a comprehensive strategy (Kapsalis 2012: 16). This complacency was soon shattered and radically transformed into a more offensive

¹⁴⁹ This was an important moment for the movement. A Marfin bank branch was attacked and set on fire by protesters who were assumed to be black-block activists. This remains unconfirmed, since no arrests were made and many have attributed the attack to provocateurs and undercover police, who have often acted in such ways at important political instants. The bank shared part of the responsibility for the casualties, as attested by the judicial authorities, for not complying with safety legislation.

reaction, with labour protests escalating, both in frequency and in scale. Traditional protest techniques, such as strikes, demonstrations and occupations reappeared at a mass scale while the government strove to narrow the legal definitions regarding the legal recognition of strikes, seeking to outlaw most of them and generally challenge the constitutional right to engage to strike action¹⁵⁰. This was a direct response to the widespread return of strike action to the forefront of the struggle.

Despite this state and government tactics, the number of strikes and of workers on strike rose dramatically, at both sectoral and general levels, starting in 2010 and peaking in 2011. The numbers were the expression of a significant upsurge in militancy compared to previous years¹⁵¹. In 2011, four-hundred and forty-five strikes and work stoppages were recorded; two-hundred and forty strikes occurred in the private sector; ninety-one in the public sector; seventy strikes in the public services; two-hundred and twenty-four in various workplaces; fifteen in particular branches; seven across different branches; sixty-two strikes were sectoral; thirty-four inter-professional; two were local strikes (Katsoridas and Labousaki 2012: 90-1). A total of one-hundred and fifty-eight work stoppages took place, two-hundred twenty-four-hour strikes at different levels as well as eighty-four forty-eight-hour strikes and nine longer strikes. Fifty-three occupations of workplaces have been recorded. Finally, in 2011, four nationwide general strikes were held (Ibid.: 91).

All the strikes displayed interesting qualitative features marking a break from the past: participation was massive, absence from work was conscious and not due to apathy or indolence, and new forms of mobilization were employed¹⁵² (Ibid.: 94). The workers more inclined to participate were those employed in stable and full-time

¹⁵⁰ During that period there was an almost constant qualification of strikes as “illegal and abusive” by the courts in conjunction with a widespread use of legislation ordaining the conscription of the participants to the strikes.

¹⁵¹ As a comparison, in 1990, considered as a peak-year for strike activities, the number of strikes reached two-hundred (Katsoridas and Labousaki 2012: 84). Since then, the general tendency has been mainly downward.

¹⁵² The demands of sectoral strikes mainly concerned, in decreasing order, the cancellation of redundancies (122 cases); the payment of salary arrears (112); the opposition to privatizations, restructurings, and changes in labour relations (105); the opposition to reductions in salary (73); broader issues related to labour relations (51); the opposition to measures of forced unemployment (45); the compliance with the terms of the collective agreements (35); demands for the signing of collective agreements (33); halting the implementation of job rotation (14); pension and insurance claims (12); working time claims (8); solidarity (6), opposition to disadvantageous changes in working conditions (4), compliance with health and safety conditions (4) (Ibid.: 92-4).

working conditions, institutionally covered by the legal framework and better organized (ibid.: 99). As for the forms of action, the GSEE and ADEDY mostly employed one-day and, less often, two-day strikes. Many workers criticized this choice, claiming that GSEE should have opted for greater escalation in terms of duration, intensity and persistence¹⁵³. In 2011, the peak year of strike activity, seven national general strikes were called on February 23, May 11, June 9, June 15, June 28-29 (the June strikes were called in coordination with the squares' movement, as discussed below), October 5, and October 19-20 (which was considered as the most massive strike and street protest since the period of the Metapolitefsi)¹⁵⁴. During the same period, three important strikes were held in particular sectors or companies. The first was in the Electricity Company DEH, against the issuing of bills containing a special property tax. The second strike, in Hellenic Steel, was directed against one hundred-eighty layoffs, and included the blockage of the factory by the workers (leading to a complete halt of the production). It was conducted through general assemblies and lasted nine months (October 31, 2011 - July 28, 2012). The third strike was in ALTER channel, a private TV station, and was directed against layoffs and the non-payment of salaries. It led to the occupation of the station and its operation by the workers. These three strikes were examples of workers' determination, of their sense of solidarity and their intention to implement conflict repertoires. In some cases they also displayed an ability to run the companies in the form of workers' control.

¹⁵³ This was also evident during my field research. As one respondent said *"Their line is to go for a walk and conduct a 24-hour strike, with no other organization, no other leverage, no other bargaining, and ok, we've opened our banners, we've been thrown some teargas and ok. This makes no sense, it doesn't take us anywhere. As in everything, this is also multifactorial. In order to achieve change, in order to achieve even certain objectives, you have to function at multiple levels. To function in communication, organization, human resources management, bargaining, education... all these should function together. You cannot thus compensate the loss of all these with a 24-hour strike and a protest in the city for half an hour"* (I27). Another interviewee claimed: *"It is unacceptable that the people have suffered from all these things, so many people have come to commit suicide, they do not have a job, 1,5 million unemployed registered (and so many working in black labour), and GSEE doing nothing! It hasn't gone on strike for more than six months, seven!"* (I13).

¹⁵⁴ The two-day strike of October 19 and 20 marked a milestone for the whole movement in the period under examination. At the time, a wave of occupations in working places was spread by thousands of workers organized through general assemblies, mainly in the public sector. More than half a million people protested on October 19, whilst strike participation reached record levels. Repressive police tactics managed to disperse mass concentrations late in the evening. On the second day of the strike, participation was lower, but people were determined to stay in Syntagma square. Violent confrontations there between protesters belonging to the KKE and anarchist groups ended up discrediting the protest.

Furthermore, the mobilization at the local and community level and the participation of specific sectors and social groups was more prominent than in the past. To conclude this section, despite the significant strikes taking place during this period, the traditional organized trade-union and labour movement has not been the hegemonic and dominant force during this phase, as it was in the cycle of Metapolitefsi. This lack of effectiveness arises from the structural and conjunctural deficiencies of the trade-union movement, as discussed both in this section and in chapter III. This weakness was compounded by the repressive tactics of the state towards trade-unionism, and the partial suppression of the explicit class dimension of mobilizations, something examined below and in the following chapters. In general, the trade-union movement failed to unify the working class and acted in most cases as a defender of the interests of particular sectors, in this case restricted to the unionized sections of the workforce. The workers' mobilizations, although important, never seemed able to “lead” the movement, or to propose a discursive frame that would significantly influence it. This is one reason the squares' movement acquired such significance in this rebellious cycle.

c. “*We don't owe, we won't sell, we won't pay*”: The movement of the squares of 2011.

“We will not leave the squares until those who compelled us to come here leave the country: the governments, the Troika (EU, ECB, IMF), banks, the IMF memoranda, and everyone who wants to exploit us. We send them the message that the debt is not ours.” Vote of the People's Assembly of Syntagma Square, Athens, May 27th 2011

“Stay quiet, or you’ll wake up the Greeks!” This slogan had allegedly been written on a banner hanging in Puerta del Sol, in Madrid, during their “Indignados” mobilizations. “Allegedly”, since as Oikonomakis and Roos mention (2013: 15), the fact was never confirmed¹⁵⁵. However, the rumour, reiterated by the media, sufficed to produce an impact. The slogan that came out of it is considered to have triggered the squares’ movement in Greece in May-June 2011: *“We are awake! What time is it? Time for them to go”* was the banner by which the Greek protesters responded to their Spanish counterparts. What happened prior to this moment were some relatively minor protests at the Spanish embassy called by Spaniards living in Greece in solidarity with the mobilizations happening in Spain. Some Greek protesters joined in, though no more than a few dozen, and started discussing calling a similar mobilization in Athens. These initiatives led to the “Thiseio gatherings”¹⁵⁶, a fact that is not widely known, since the squares’ movement in Athens is thought to have started simply with a Facebook call¹⁵⁷. On May 22, the “Spanish Embassy Solidarity Assembly” moved in Syntagma square, holding discussions in both Greek and Spanish, and constituting the first “thematic groups”. That was the start of a small-scale occupation of the place with tents and of the launch of the website “real-democracy.gr”. At the same time, a different group called “the 300 Greeks”, more nationalistic in character, also issued a call to occupy the Syntagma square, setting up a stall in situ and gathering signatures for lifting the immunity of MPs from prosecution charges. In addition, several Facebook posts called for an occupation of Syntagma square to start on May 25, and reached 17.000 signatures.

All these happened at a time when the debate on these new forms of mobilization, occasioned by both the Spanish Indignados and the Arab Spring movements, started to gain momentum. Furthermore, the Syntagma square is a place of special significance in Athens. Located in front of the Parliament, it is physically and symbolically one of the

¹⁵⁵ This was, however, a banner hanged during a football match, referring to the defeat of Panathinaikos, a Greek team, by Barcelona (Giovanopoulos and Mitropoulos 2011: 274).

¹⁵⁶ The Spanish embassy is located in the Athenian neighbourhood of Thiseio.

¹⁵⁷ Interviewees (I27) and (I37) have provided important information on these gatherings, since they both participated from the first instant. As both claimed, they had themselves no connection whatsoever with the people gathered there. They simply passed by one day and decided to participate.

most central points of the city adjacent to the majority of the administrative buildings. Its symbolic importance has strong historical roots: the current Parliament being in the old palace buildings, the square was initially named “the palace square”. It was renamed “Syntagma square” (Syntagma meaning “the Constitution”), after the “revolution of September 3, 1843”, when the people protested and demanded the establishment of a constitution in the country and the departure of the Bavarian officials from the government. The revolution succeeded, ushering in the period of constitutional monarchy in lieu of absolute monarchy. Most contemporary protests, whatever their political orientation, end up at this square. The symbolic weight of the place is evident among protesters, especially during the movement of the squares.

The response of the people to these calls went beyond any expectation. Thousands of people, 30,000 according to some estimations (Giovanopoulos and Mitropoulos 2011: 279) participated in this first rally. On Sunday 29, the first mass rally was held, with more than 150,000 gathering in Syntagma square and others gathering in fifty-five cities¹⁵⁸ (Ibid.: 280). The following Sunday, more than half a million protesters gathered, while more than 10,000 participated in a popular assembly. The movement reached its peak on June 15, when the two trade-union confederations GSEE and ADEDY called a national strike. Hundreds of thousands of determined protesters remained in Syntagma square encircling the parliament, while, for the first time during the movement, the police used violent means in attempting to disperse the protesters. The sense of solidarity displayed by the protesters was impressive. The government was on the brink of resignation and started to show clear signs of collapse, which finally led to a government reshuffle. Another strike also acted as a landmark, in June 28-29, when the mid-term memorandum¹⁵⁹ was to be voted in the parliament, and GSEE and ADEDY called for a two-day strike. The general assembly of the square and the unions issued a joint call and hundreds of thousands participated. Despite high

¹⁵⁸ Some attempts at a nationwide coordination among the different assemblies in the squares of the country took place. On June 15 a nationwide call from all cities was issued in Syntagma square, whilst in July 9 and 10 a nationwide two-days assembly was conducted, an “Assembly of the assemblies” as it was called. Coordination processes did not manage to substantially link the different squares’ movements; however, a de-facto coordination did exist, due to the convergence of demands, forms of action, organization etc., with the Syntagma square movement playing the leading and pace setter role.

¹⁵⁹ A new mid-term agreement bridging the initial and final targets set by the memorandum.

levels of police repression and brutality the protesters proved being resilient. The Syntagma square occupation lasted approximately two months, from May 25 until the end of July, but it started to decline after June 30, when the last large protest was called after the vote in Parliament. Thousands of participants, celebrities, but also ordinary people from all over the world, sent during the movement messages of solidarity in every imaginable way. On July 30, the state and municipal police forces invaded the square, destroying all the facilities. Several efforts to sustain or revive the movement afterwards failed.

The Syntagma protests rallied a significant proportion of Attica's population. According to both estimates and research by academics and pollsters, more than 2,6 million people (29% of the entire Greek population) at least passed by Syntagma at one or several of the calls during that month (Public Issue 2011). The main core of the stable participants, fully committed to the movement and the collective processes of any kind, was also significant (according to Kalamvokidis, two to four thousand people participated in assemblies and similar structures on a daily basis, in 2012: 7). Massive protests were mostly organized on Sundays, whilst thousands of people gathered in the square every day for the whole period. The days of general strikes (June 15 and 28-29) were the major milestones for the movement. The perception of the mobilizations by Greek society as a whole was also astonishing: more than 80% of the people stated approving them or having a positive opinion. The squares' movement refuted three axiomatic assumptions of the dominant discourse about protests: that public rage should be expressed only in a short time span; that revolt should be left to the young; and finally that protest is simply symbolic (Vradis 2011: 216-7).

As for the composition of the participants, it went clearly beyond the boundaries of the "usual suspects" participating in social movements. A large proportion of the participants had no prior experience of mobilizations or even involvement with politics, and they spanned all ages, coming from different social backgrounds, origins and professions. In terms of social groups, the participants came from the working class but also the petty bourgeoisie and the middle layers affected by the crisis and threatened

by proletarianization and social downgrading, or actually proletarianized. This point confirms to a large extent our approach on the class structure and its transformations presented in chapter III. In general, this is a movement which had as its active core layers of young people from higher education backgrounds, seriously affected by the crisis, probably living even before its start in a situation of relative hardship. Although this movement was not organized explicitly along class lines, and the class dimension was rather underestimated, there was the potential of a social alliance underlying, as will be later examined. As far as the age factor is concerned, the youth did not dominate but did set a tone in terms of both presence and forms of action.

A general assembly was held every evening since the very first day¹⁶⁰. Two main political demands dominated its debates: the “cancellation of the memorandums”, and particularly of the mid-term Agreement to be voted on June 29, 2011, and “real democracy”. The first resolution of the general assembly, which served as the constitutive text, included three crucial points: (1) the identity of the protesters: “we are workers, unemployed, retirees, young, who have come to Syntagma, to fight and struggle for our lives and our future”; (2) their demands: “we won’t leave the squares, until all those who have led us here go away: the government, the Troika, the banks, the memoranda, and all those who exploit us”; and (3) a call to workers to join: “We call all workers to go on strike in the following period, and organize protests that will end up in Syntagma and stay there” (First Amendment 2011; Mitropoulos 2011: 65-6). The movement expressed in a salient way the need for a new form of politicization, fostering new forms of organization and action and bringing to the surface the deep political crisis in society. This need was also expressed through one of its most ambiguous features: the movement was not initiated by political parties or established political actors (unions etc.), but by “the people”, or so it was perceived. Its identity was therefore perceived as *external* or even to some extent *opposed to* political actors. This has often led to an opposition to the sheer presence of parties or even unions in the

¹⁶⁰ Actually, the assembly was a reference point mostly for protesters of the “lower square”, a distinction to be explained below.

movement, a point raising significant issues. This is one of the core issues of this thesis, to which we will return in detail below.

Returning for a while to the main features of the movement of the squares, this was, as Giovanopoulos has aptly noted, first and foremost a “living organism” (Giovanopoulos 2011a: 41). In addition to the general assembly, thematic assemblies and groups were soon organized, and, simultaneously, tents were set up, initiating an occupation of the space of the square. In the first two days, more than six-thousand people were registered as volunteers for these various groups. A whole range of self-organized structures sprang up in the square¹⁶¹. All these forms functioned via assemblies which gathered on a daily basis and rallied thousands of people. The problems were solved as they emerged, through open processes of control, self-institution and work division, in a horizontal organizational way in order to avoid problems of exclusion due to specialization (Giovanopoulos 2011a: 53); however, all these operations were far more amenable to organizing self-managed activities than to tackle broader issues, such as besieging the Parliament, organizing street blockades etc. Additionally, the squares have also been the site of “a huge artistic event” (Stefanakis 2011: 85). Actors, musicians, dancers, painters, laser and graffiti artists, performers, contributed to a new form of everyday life in the squares. All these events conveyed an implicit refutation of the distinction between artists and audience, while even solidarity concerts by world-famous artists were performed without a stage or platform. These practices functioned to a great degree in a redemptive and liberating way for the participants: personal expression was stimulated as a constituent component of the collective cause.

¹⁶¹ Installations included a first-aid station which was later turned into a proper mini-hospital under the responsibility of the metro workers' union; a media centre which also hosted the website www.real-democracy.gr; an online radio station; a translation centre; a neighbourhood/local organization centre; a central organization centre with the technical responsibility for the entire occupation including the general assembly agenda; a performing arts centre; and several stations devoted to daily needs (kitchen, cleaning services etc.). In total, nineteen working groups were formed: secretarial support and reception; international solidarity; communication/multimedia; campaigns; laboratory of alternative communities/eco-communities; material supply/storage; cleaning/environment; artists; translations; legal support; protest organization and resistance in medium-term plan; safeguarding and respect/peacemakers; first-aid/health; feeding; technical support; time bank; local assemblies mapping; calmness; homeless people. Twelve thematic working groups were also constituted: direct democracy; resistance to the medium-term plan; people with disabilities; justice and legal issues; employment and unemployment; social solidarity; economy; education; politics; technological evolutions; health and insurance; gender (Giovanopoulos and Mitropoulos 2011: 341).

Moreover, several “open consultation days” were organized, on various issues (the debt, in June 6 and 10, direct democracy, in June 17 and July 7, and eco-communities/transactions without money in June 23). On these days, contributions by professionals and experts were important in sustaining the campaign in terms of information and of a persuasive and firmly based argumentation. However, a certain suspicion towards expertise also arose, under the argument of “direct democracy” not reproducing experts and buttressing the power implicit in expertise. Furthermore, the general assembly tried to ensure a democratic functioning: speakers were selected by lot, each one had only a minute and a half at their disposal in order to allow as many as possible to participate. Direct confrontation between speakers taking the form of a dialogue was forbidden, and so were clapping and booing. These stipulations entailed risks of bureaucratic or even anti-democratic deviations despite the intentions aiming at a more participatory and democratic process, and have often led to significant problems, which will be further examined in section e. Even more interesting than the - to a certain extent reasonable - existence of such deviations, is a tendency by some participants to deny them and to mythologize those assemblies by presenting them as paradigms of “direct democracy”.

All these processes did not concern equally or involve all the those who participated in the movement. A certain distinction, already implied, was considered as having emerged between two of its constitutive parts. This distinction was conceptualized in spatial terms, between the “upper square” and the “lower square”. There were indeed, obvious differences between the two. The “lower square” was the place where the more politicized protesters gathered. The general assembly and the meetings of the thematic groups were held there, which made it become the epicentre for the processes of self-organization and of direct democracy. On the other side, the “upper square”, the area in front of the parliament, became the place where the less politicized people gathered more spontaneously and in greater numbers. Many of these people were participating in protests for the first time, had less interest in political processes in the past, and manifested more immediate feelings of frustration,

indignation, anger or spontaneous reaction to the memorandum policies. Indeed, this was reflected in many elements, including slogans¹⁶², forms of action¹⁶³ and even the protesters' outlook¹⁶⁴. The point raised here refers to the relation between the two. There was an obvious discrepancy between the number of people participating in the assemblies of the "lower square" and the mass character of the big rallies, raising questions about their broader representativeness. However, as it often happens, such structures even if they do not actually represent the whole, contribute to its organization and politicization. The "lower square" served such a purpose, without however actually functioning as a "vanguard" for the whole movement. Interviewee (I12) claimed characteristically: *"Yes, the 'lower square' did help, and by providing an ideological background. In the movement. If only the 'upper' one existed, it would be much more unstable. The 'lower' one was the basis. But they did not express the whole movement. If I think of the people being in the 'upper square', well, I cannot say they were expressed by the 'lower' ones."*¹⁶⁵

However the distinction has often been over-emphasized, particularly by politicized protesters. In many cases, they denigrated protesters of the upper square, for supposedly being totally "non-political"¹⁶⁶. This perception, elitist in its origin, ignored the potentialities of a situation where, for the first time, those who participated extended far beyond the fairly narrow spectrum of usual activists¹⁶⁷. Such an approach would lead to severe limitations on a movement, which provided the possibility of a new,

¹⁶² "Upper square" protesters used more superficial and less politicized slogans, often including insults, such as *"Traitors"*, *"Burn, burn the brothel parliament"* etc. whilst the "lower square" ones adopted far more political, in the narrow sense, slogans, and insisted on direct democracy terms.

¹⁶³ "Upper square" protesters generally used whistles, saucepans, handmade instruments of every kind to make noise, whilst "lower square" ones employed more conventional forms of action.

¹⁶⁴ (I12) characteristically noted when asked on the distinction: *"If I am not mistaken, there were the 'upper' ones, those who wanted to express their outbreak, and the 'lower' ones, who were kind of intellectuals, they wanted to express themselves with arguments etc."*

¹⁶⁵ (I4) claimed: *"Ok, the 'upper square' seemed like a temporary festival, but the 'lower square' was neither effective nor... there were some people who were thinkers, but they could not offer a cohesion, well, how should I say this, a common ground, eh, a common reference point."*

¹⁶⁶ On the contrary, as a protester of the upper square noted, the latter had its own procedures, not as structured, coherent and clear, but equally interesting (stalls, material, megaphones, loudspeakers, whistles, placards, motorcycle protests, slogans, banners, lasers, painted faces, artistic interventions); constituting what has been aptly termed "a popular liberating feast" (Stavrou 2011: 32). Their demands also focused on anti-systemic, anti-governmental, anti-memorandum, democratic elements, though uttered in different manners.

¹⁶⁷ As for the potentialities, suffice to give the following description, in an upper square protester's words, *"You could see people of a progressive origin yelling loud "Traitors" [an old slogan of a far-right tint] and of conservative origins emotionally singing "When will the skies be clear" [a well-known Left, revolutionary song]."* (Stavrou 2011: 35).

broader, social alliance. This perception of clear-cut distinction did not correspond to the actual constitution of the movement. It is true that a number of differences emerged separating these two spaces, which at some points even dissociated into distinct worlds. In terms of discourse, this was particularly striking: an abyss separated the sophisticated, political and intellectual discourse of the general assemblies from the “football stadium” type of atmosphere of the “upper square”. However, in some cases “the two squares” merged, many people passed through both, shared common reflections and basic demands (even if not always identified as such), showed solidarity and protected each other against the police¹⁶⁸. Interestingly, some protesters seemed to have started by participating in the “upper square” and then gradually migrated to the “lower” one¹⁶⁹. A duality did exist, but not a polarization (Leontidou 2012: 310). As an “upper square” protester claimed, “apart from some ‘fanatics’ of each square, the vast majority of the people participating were in motion and went up and down the stairs all the time” (Stavrou 2011: 37). The distinction was, in reality, more sociological than political.

This distinction has also been relevant to a debate on whether, and to what extent, far-right forces actually participated in the movement. This assumption was linked, on the one hand, to the perception mentioned above of the profile of the participants of the “upper square”, and on the other hand, to the use of Greek flags by those same participants¹⁷⁰. Indeed, the use of patriotic symbols is unusual in protests in Greece. They are often being seen as referring to nationalist or right-wing political forces, because of ideological connotations related to the “nation”¹⁷¹. In the squares’ movement, Greek symbols and flags appeared at a mass scale for the first time in

¹⁶⁸ (I29) claimed: “*The problem lies in this ‘divide and conquer’ attitude, which suits everybody in this damn country, and in all countries I think. We split the people, and instead of being two thousand people all together, and say ‘the square’, we said, ‘we are one thousand here and one thousand in the lower square’. I did not have such issues, I went to both squares and I did not feel like being cut-off*”.

¹⁶⁹ According to (I31) (and a relevant story was narrated by I28): “*At first, I was wandering around. I sat upstairs, and downstairs, everywhere. I have shouted insults towards the politicians, and everything, without feeling that there is a problem with this. Gradually, as time went by, I felt that, ok, we’ve done this, let’s now go downstairs to make some sense. I felt that the “upper” thing stopped to make sense.*”

¹⁷⁰ Such conclusions are usually linked to the impressive rise in GD’s electoral support after 2012, to be dealt with briefly in the next chapters.

¹⁷¹ In the 1940-1944 Resistance against German occupation, left-wing forces and EAM itself extensively used both patriotic references and symbols. Defeat of EAM and a sustained effort by the Right to marginalize the Left has led it to appropriate for its own interests such discourse and symbols, identifying the Left as external to the “whole national social body”.

years. This must not lead us to identify these protesters with the far-right. In our view, this unusual phenomenon was linked firstly to the fact that new strata were participating in protests with no prior experience of such political participation, without being familiar with traditional references and symbols of the social and labour movement, and with more mainstream political and ideological references. Secondly, the use of the Greek flag revealed a deep social (“national”) crisis, structurally destabilizing and affecting the entire social body (Kouvelakis 2011b: 145). It is actually an indication of disengagement of broader social strata from official politics and narratives and expresses the potential of reconstructing the “people” as a social subject (Sotiris 2011: 160-1)¹⁷². The fact that the perceived threat, incarnated by the Troika, was to some extent external and identified with Germany definitely contributed to the construction of this frame with national characteristics and references. This is a major development, which affected the very unifying identity of the movement, to be dealt with in the next chapters, combined with the outcomes of the fieldwork.

The prior assessment on the disconnection between the use of flags and the far-right, does not mean that far-right wing forces did not participate at all in the movement, particularly in the upper square. Their participation however was neither tightly organized nor hegemonic. Far-right wing forces rarely aim at, or have succeeded in, developing practices within social mobilizations, a terrain largely dominated by the Left in Greece due to the specificities of its tradition. The far-right has always been more directly linked with certain institutions and sectors of the State, and its relative autonomy has been more limited. Its presence in the movement was thus mainly suggested a posteriori, as an aspect of the constant struggle for meaning attribution. Whether the social dynamics of squares' movement are considered as carrying a

¹⁷² Interviewees' responses on this point are interesting, as will also be examined in the next chapter: hesitation prevailed, and most claimed that at the time they did not associate the presence of flags with the extreme right but that nowadays they do. The majority did not, or would not, carry a flag, however, most of them also claimed not to have a problem with their presence, as expressing a certain unity. Indicatively, from an interviewee who clarified himself as not being fond of flags: *“Greek flags were used because protesters had differentiated their position from parties - because in most previous protests, people always participated in party blocks. While now... simple people went down in the streets. And there was also at the time a devaluation – much-used word but it is true – the political system is devalued, and no one wanted to participate under a party flag. They wanted to be there because of what was happening, in Greece, in their lives, and this is how they expressed it. That is why this whole... ‘Greeknness’ existed”* (I11).

subversive dimension, or incorporated into official discourses or even exploited by extreme far-wing narratives, depends, to a great extent, on the balance of forces at the level of the discursive struggle for the attribution of meaning. What has actually emerged in the squares regarding this debate on national symbols is a peculiar “flag battle”, during which, instead of opposing Greek flags, protesters carried flags of other countries as well, mostly of countries in which similar movements were emerging (Spain, Portugal etc.). This sort of competition, ended up producing a colorful feast with less nationalistic connotations.

Furthermore, during the movement of the squares, space was of crucial importance, in the sense examined in section f of chapter III. As Vradis notes, “every incident of collective action is indelibly etched in space [...] Every form of collective action has an inherent spatiality” (2011: 211). In this case, Syntagma square, as other squares in many Greek cities, acted as the *meeting point* for thousands of protesters. A struggle for the domination over the city centre unfolded, which manifested the spatialized aspect of the social conflict (Poulios et al 2013: 13). Syntagma square faces the parliament, surrounded by other government buildings, and functions as a symbol of central power structures. Here, “the *urban* returns as the place of collective resistance against a political stratum that is in crisis, as a space of conflict and encounter” (Ibid.). Space itself, and its use was (again) at stake. As Leontidou notes, “material spaces are often recurrent: the same spaces are used for different political activities through time” (2012: 303). Open air presence becomes a focus for struggle itself, a claim and demand, a statement on a different political function, which includes citizens, being both *seen* and *gathered together* in the same place as collective subjectivities. Squares in Greece have always been “spaces of concentration, interaction and socialization”, playing a central role in the life of the city (Mpresta 2011: 92). Such a focus on the local space expresses a tendency towards the re-territorialization of politics.

This point is also relevant to the debate on the “digital” or “virtual” character of these movements. In our view, although the role of social media was important, it

consisted mainly in facilitating the organization and the coordination of the movements, neither substituting the physical presence, nor expressing a supposed “new era”, in which movements would be constituted in virtual rather than in material space. In other words, these media were means and tools and not constituents of the movement themselves; this was evident among participants¹⁷³. Of course, these new means are not simply an extension of the old ones; they do actually serve and express a new logic, the main element of which being that users are creators and not simply consumers of their own products (Giovanopoulos 2011b: 239-40). This innovation does have an impact on the constitution of the movements as well as on the transformation of the participants' consciousness. But in reality, social media have supported the re-territorialization of politics, not worked against it (Stavrides 2011: 172). Furthermore, collective forms of organization can basically emerge in material spaces, as a necessary condition to forge trust (Leontidou 2012: 307). This is why the police always tries to disperse concentrations in space, in many cases rather aggressively, linking physical dispersion – rightly – to the dissolution of the movement itself. Occupation as a practice interrupts, and potentially subverts, normality, and specifically the supposedly “normal” uses of space. Police control and the maintenance of law and order is thus aimed at redefining the material and spatial substance of public space and its transformation into controlled space, as the material subject of daily life control. In other words, spatial control acts as an indicator of its materiality sustained by certain usages aiming at disciplining and controlling human activity (Dalakoglou 2011: 222-3). This strategy does not simply aim at preventing or dispersing social concentrations, but also at hindering their future development. As Butler notes, “social body constitution in public view, and despite those forms of police and economic power which seek to isolate it again, sets the fundamental terms for future political demands”¹⁷⁴ (Butler 2014: 63-4). Politics, according to Rancière (Rancière 2001), in opposition to the will of the

¹⁷³ For example, in a relevant debate in the assembly, the majority of participants have positioned themselves against the use of electronic consultation.

¹⁷⁴ This “bodification” is identified by protesters as well. This is the argument used by an interviewee to claim that the “upper square” protesters had a political orientation as well: “*Their way was more 'bodified', let's say, an indication of their political character. Of the political devaluation, which in the lower square assembly could be imprinted through the texts*” (112).

police ordering bodies to “move along”, to simply circulate in space, “consists in transforming this space of “moving-along” into a space for the appearance of a subject: i.e., the people, the workers, the citizens: It consists in refiguring the space, of what there is to do there, what is to be seen or named therein”.

To conclude this section, this analysis of the spatial dimension has also lead us to name the movement under discussion as the “squares’ movement” and not the “movement of the outraged”, in Greek the “*aganaktismenoi*” in reference to the “Spanish Indignados”. This issue has been a semi-open debate on the definition and identification of the movement, both among activists and researchers. The first formulation has been selected here for the following four reasons: (1) the location, the centrality of Syntagma square and of urban space more generally is of vital importance to the constitution of the movement as approached above; (2) the reference to squares emphasizes the open and nodal centre of material and virtual communication, with open-air living and complex activities taking place, a reference to the ancient Greek *agora*, with similar connotations - a link identified by the protesters themselves (Leontidou 2012: 302); (3) the term “outraged/*aganaktismenoi*”, though used elsewhere (especially in Spain), has a particular connotation in Greek, linked to the activity of far-right groups appearing under the cover of “outraged citizens”; (4) indignation as a spontaneous reaction united those who gathered in the squares, but soon proved being inadequate, first and foremost among the protesters themselves¹⁷⁵. For these main reasons, the term “squares’ movement” has been retained. For reasons of accuracy, it should however be noted that different approaches of the identity of the movement are to be found among protesters, which are essentially related to their participation in either the “upper” or the “lower” square. The latter firmly repudiated the term “outraged”, whilst the former more easily either adopted it, or accepted both terms. This element came also as a finding in our field research, in which a few participants of the “upper square” hadn’t even heard the term “squares’ movement” and referred to it as

¹⁷⁵ One of the most prominent banners hanging in Syntagma square during nearly the whole movement declared “*we are not outraged, we are determined*”.

“the outraged”. The mainstream media referred to the movement exclusively as “the outraged”, a factor that also played a role in shaping its perception.

d. Other forms and structures of the social movement.

Apart from the two main forms examined above: strikes and the squares' movement, various other forms of protest developed in the period under examination; more particularly practices of civil disobedience, local resistances and various thematic mobilizations. The most significant initiative of civil disobedience was the movement called “I won't pay”, which called on people to refuse to pay the fees for certain public services, mainly road tolls but also bus fares and hospital services. The movement started in 2008, when the inhabitants living close to a rough and unmaintained road refused to pay the toll. Shortly afterwards, following an increase in toll fees all over the country despite the problematic state of the roads, the movement generalized. During the years 2010-2011, it emerged as one of the main forms of civil resistance, with a large part of the general population participating. The movement was organized in direct democratic forms, through citizens' co-ordinations, and received, in some cases, support from institutional actors, mainly local authorities. Later, it spread to other areas of daily life, mostly related to access to beaches and public transport services. In autumn 2011, after the imposition by the government of a property tax paid through electricity bills, the movement spilled to the refusal to pay the bills, and in some cases reconnected to the power grid households which, due to non-payment of the bills, had been cut from electricity. This unauthorized reconnection often involved the participation of employees of the electricity company, who refused to execute orders to cut off electricity and occupied the company's offices. Participation in those actions over the 2010-2011 period was very broad. Concerning the tolls, according to several estimates by the companies, more than 25% of users refused to pay. These

movements were confronted with the repressive attitude of the government and the courts which prosecuted hundreds of participants.

The choice of civil disobedience as a form of protest was triggered by the inadequacy of public services and by the economic inability of an growing part of the population to pay for the increased fees¹⁷⁶. These acts of civil disobedience appeared thus as legitimate practices, and led to debates on the judicial system and its inherent injustices. This is another case in which a crisis in the legitimacy of the state and its mechanisms becomes evident, but also, through mass praxis, is intensified¹⁷⁷. Indeed, the point at which broad sections of society consider that laws are in conflict with ethics, with their perception of morality, is deeply destabilizing for the normal functioning of capitalist societies. In such cases, the foundation of the social contract underpinning the acceptance and implementation of laws appears clearly compromised. According to Douzinas, “behind economic systems and legal codes, there are implicit customs, conventions and habits, a whole social ethos, which allows their operation and mitigates their strict and unfair results” (Douzinas 2011a: 58). The rupture of this implicit compact forces the state to resort to physical force and repression to support its function, thus further eroding its social legitimacy¹⁷⁸. The reaction to civil disobedience practices by state officials has been Draconian, both in terms of repression/persecution, and in terms of the stridency of public debate. This response, accompanied by the insistent claim that citizens have an obligation to obey the law, amounts to an acknowledgement of its very failure. The government loses its legitimacy when mass disobedience does not allow the application of laws (Ibid.: 117).

The decision to disobey an unjust and unethical law, perceived almost as an obligation

¹⁷⁶ A protester participating in the “I do not pay the tolls” movement, claimed characteristically: “As a logic, it was reasonable. People were tired of paying. Yes, we stepped out of the car, even the motorcycle, we lifted the bar, or we followed closely the front car and went through the tolls with it. I had absolutely no hesitation, I felt no regret for what I was doing, I felt like doing what was absolutely reasonable. And the same goes for public transportation, public television, the electricity, yes, everything. In a welfare state, all these should be provided... Some times I simply did not have the money to pay, in other cases this was my reaction. I felt satisfaction, for not paying” (111).

¹⁷⁷ Engagement in these practices led often directly to illegal and possibly dangerous actions (eg. refusing to pay tolls often meant confronting the employees collecting them, or even getting out of the car and lifting the barrier).

¹⁷⁸ This is reminiscent of Melucci when noting that “the closer the conflict advances towards the vital nodes of the system, the more probable repressive reaction and recourse to violence become, if political channels are not able to transform collective pressures into reformist policies and democratization of decision-making.” (Melucci 1989: 371).

by citizens, transforms them from beings simply subjected to law to real citizens (Ibid.: 134). This is the reason why state officials have so strenuously opposed such acts.

The other forms of disobedience and protest examined here also present similar features. The Keratea rebellion consisted of the residents' reaction to a planned waste treatment centre. Although this rebellion had clearly different, and very specific, roots and significance (environmental, local, of personal well-being etc.), what is of interest here is its correlation to resistances and grievances in the general context of the crisis. The emergence and the characteristics of this form of action are firmly linked to the broader environment of the crisis. The dispute began back in 1995, and in 2007 the municipality of Keratea lost its appeal to the Council of State, despite the fact the area was characterized as an archaeological site and a "place of outstanding natural beauty". At that point, the residents and the local authorities formed a joint coordinating committee for mobilization. In 2008 they prevented the start of work on the landfill, while developing multiple social, cultural and political initiatives, involving the majority of residents. The main protest cycle began in 2010, when the contractors attempted to start the construction of the waste treatment centre. By early 2011, the area was practically occupied by residents on the one hand and police on the other. The open confrontation started on December 10, 2010, and ended 128 days later, in April 18, 2011. A vast repertoire of action, including street fighting, roadblocks, occupations and sabotage, was used during the clashes between the residents and the anti-riot police forces (Evaggelinidis 2012: 44). The actions were both violent and inclusive, with the majority of residents participating, including high school students and representatives of local authorities (the mayor, priest, teachers, etc.). This cycle ended with a partial victory of the residents, the project being indefinitely postponed.

The motivations of this protracted movement are unrelated to the crisis and the memoranda policies, since its re-emergence is the consequence of the decision of the state authorities to start the construction of the waste treatment centre. However, the Keratea rebellion interacted with other mobilizations discussed previously. Indeed, many of their features do have similar connotations, especially in relation to

perceptions of politics, the de-legitimization of state institutions and the ability to express these feelings through collective mobilization and self-organization. The movement included frames related to the crisis. The generalized grievances acted as a mean for legitimizing both the mobilization and the confrontational actions of the residents both in their own eyes and in broader sections of the society. Two main diagnostic frameworks have been detected: injustice and attribution of responsibility (Evaggelinidis 2012: 66). These frameworks, alongside the emotional dynamics of the movement and solidarity feelings and practices, were the connecting links to the broader movements. Thus, the movement's development, its effects on participants and its forms of action and organization have resulted in its connection to the broader social movement in Greece amid the crisis.

Another manifestation of the social movement in the period under examination consisted in disrupting the national day parades, on October 28 2011 all over Greece to protest against the austerity measures¹⁷⁹. These actions followed the mass two-day strike on October 19 and 20, and a wave of occupations of government buildings by labour movement activists which escalated during that entire month, leading to an almost complete paralysis of public administration. The disruption of parades happened across the country. As Kouvelakis (2011c) notes, "The army march past was canceled; school delegations, civilians and reservists marched in its place, many with fists raised, to the acclaim of the crowd. Slogans taken up by protesters across the country linked the 'No' of 1940 with the current situation, likening today's leaders with the wartime collaborators; chants and songs from the Resistance mingled with those from the mobilization against the military dictatorship, while German and EU flags were burned before jubilant crowds. A symbolic threshold had been crossed: for large swathes of society, it seemed that a connection was emerging between the social and national elements of the protests, linking the present with popular memory. It was in response to this situation that a shaken Papandreou suggested his high-risk referendum initiative,

¹⁷⁹ In October 28, Greece's refusal to surrender to Italian forces, symbolizing the beginning of World War II and the resistance, is nationally celebrated each year. Parades by students and the military are normally organized in all regions and cities.

which turned out to be fatal.” In certain places, such as in Thessaloniki, the disruption had exceptional characteristics hinting at rebellion, and officials were chased from the platforms including Karolos Papoulias, the President of the Republic.

The act of disrupting national parades had an obvious ideological significance, since it directly challenged the official narrative on the construction of the nation and the people's role in it. The form taken by the action is also significant. Citizens all over Greece did not simply protest during the parades, but in most cases turned the parades themselves into protests, marching with banners and shouting slogans against austerity measures and the government. This action was yet another example of people taking possession of their history and of past protests, using them to oppose the official narrative. The events of October 28 2011 led to a deeper political destabilization, with the state and the police trying to re-assert their authority over the celebration, and mainstream media attacking the protests as “blasphemous”. The debates on national parades continued for years, resulting in a militarization of the celebrations, which, in many cases, led to their complete closure to the public. This kind of protest makes evident the character of the political crisis as a “national” one, in which different interpretations of the function of the society as a whole come into collision. This point confirms our prior estimation, on the more unified pattern of the mobilized layers of the society, providing at the same time the perspective of a more hegemonic unification under a class dimension in the broader sense, as a potential (with exploitation remaining strongly at the forefront of such protests).

A similar tendency is also evident in a tactic employed frequently in the early stages of the movement of that period, i.e. physical attacks against politicians. Provoking wide controversy, these attacks became a concrete expression of public outrage. If, as Douzinas notes, indignation is an emotional and moral reaction, and rage is its moral-political maturation, this rage was personalized against those who are thought to have committed injustices, by means of verbal and physical attacks (Douzinas 2011a: 166-7). This expression of political hostility was not at first motivated by personal hatred against the opponent himself, but against his position, a position

operating against the interests of the majority of society, and it was a strong indication of the crisis of legitimation unfolding¹⁸⁰. However, it became eventually more personalized, and turned against those representatives taking the most aggressive attitudes against the popular protest, but also, though to a lesser extent, in general against politicians of the main systemic political parties. This type of action led to attacks without extensive use of violence, mostly of a verbal and symbolically humiliating character, such as pelting the targeted person with eggs or yogurt. These tactics became so widespread that those politicians who had become the focus of popular anger hesitated before taking a walk in public spaces. It is no coincidence that these tactics were most evident at the beginning of the period of crisis. The reasons of their decline are twofold: on the one hand, the state and governmental officials made strenuous efforts to de-legitimize them, as part of a campaign against “blind forms of violence”. This campaign was to some point successful, since these tactics usually were individualized, without any collective backing, thus easier to denigrate. On the other hand, the gradual transformation of indignation and rage into more political reactions, based on collective mobilization, and the politicization of the debate and of the practices that were adopted, led to a noticeable reduction in the number of that type of individualistic and spontaneous acts.

To conclude on this point, the crucial element in all the practices discussed above, apart from their common starting points, causes and forms, is the convergence of some of their specific features and their relative unification into a common mobilization against austerity measures imposed through the memorandum policies. In this mobilization, the perceptions of politics, the modes of self-involvement and self-organization are of particular importance. The moments at which these different forms coalesced were precisely the moments during which the movement escalated and developed its enhanced potential. The most characteristic example is the fusion of the squares' movement with the two general strikes of June and October. Until that point, a

¹⁸⁰ (I38) claimed characteristically, while laughing: “*In my mind, in an ideal situation, or anyway, in a good situation, a representative of the people does not need police protection. Only against a lunatic! Right? But when you see a deputy eating under the protection of the riot police... hahaha... well??*”

debate was going on over the potential of including trade-unions in the movement of the squares with one side claiming that the unions antagonized the movement's cause and the other trying to build the convergence. The shift in opinion on this crucial issue provided a new dynamic to the movement. This shift was largely brought about by the successful intervention of the most radical elements of the Left, who systematically tried to overcome the initial, and to some degree instinctive, reaction against the trade-unions and make such a conjunction of forces effective¹⁸¹.

A second element common to all these practices was that their mode of functioning was preserved to some extent in the period that followed, a period which was less characterized by mass political protests moving centre stage. Several structures flourished based on that logic¹⁸². Some of these initiatives were projects of neighbourhood class reconstruction, trying to build up a response to social fragmentation and unemployment. Others consisted in forms of popular/youth self-organization and emancipation, aimed at building "from below" the conditions of a dignified life. They were structured by the principles of contestability, class solidarity and of an alternative culture. The impact of the crisis, leading to the marginalization and the impoverishment of significant parts of the population, boosted the emergence of solidarity structures, with more or less institutionalized features. Their main slogan was "*no one should be left alone to face the crisis*", and their key principle was that self-organization and participation were the only way to reclaim a better life in the present and in the future (Triantafyllopoulou and Sayas 2012: 9). In other words, "the main aim of these initiatives is to create spaces where the local community can search for survival paths, fostering also cultural expression and creativity. Some of them focus on creating new forms of organizing the unemployed people and the working class at a

¹⁸¹ Though in overall it seems fair to argue that the Left intervened in the movement of the squares in a rather ambivalent way, balancing between the submission to the spontaneity of the movement and an external critique, without actually getting implicated, at least not in the sense defined by Marx as the need for "the educator [to be] himself educated" (Marx and Engels 1969: 13) – a point to be further examined later.

¹⁸² Such as local initiatives, labour clubs in neighbourhoods, solidarity structures, social clinics and pharmacies, collective kitchens, initiatives against electricity cuts due to unpaid bills, cultural initiatives, collectives providing free school lessons to students in need or lessons of the Greek language to migrants, local assemblies, antifascist initiatives.

local level, some others mainly on upgrading the life conditions dealing with cultural and social issues” (Triantafyllopoulou et al. 2012: 17).

As Poullos et al. underline (2013: 12), the notion of “community” played a decisive role in the shaping of these movements. This kind of activism, strongly mediated by spatial practices, urban issues and forms of local organization, led to the development of specific unifying processes. Mutual objectives coalesced among residents from different areas of the city, due to the tangible nature of local issues. Addressing these common issues drew diverse actors into common interactions, reinforcing feelings of trust and emotional solidarity. It also reduced the feelings of individual insecurity about risks and helped in overcoming problems of collective action. Solidarity indeed counters phenomena of escalating social competition, and allows the actors to engage into increasingly risky conflicts¹⁸³. Such practice and experimentation becomes thus a way to acquire the basic skills of political agency and knowledge.

This process led to the construction of new frames that created a new common collective identity and offered the possibility of gaining support and resonance in the public sphere, leading to the potential constitution of new political subjectivities (Arampatzi and Nicholls 2012: 2600-02). In this sense, partial protests, such as the local ones, can be a fruitful example of how barriers between political identities can be demolished rather than reinforced, acting as a bridge between different actors or even political traditions. Of course, internal problems of organization, function and coordination have emerged, as well as difficulties in generalizing the confrontation and surmounting individual or local barriers, or even problems such as the lack of funding or resources. Further, participation in these forms has not been massive, especially in the period following the mobilizations under study, proving on the one hand the insufficiency of decentralized structures alone, in the absence of processes in the

¹⁸³ State and governmental mechanisms have developed a two-fold strategy towards such initiatives, aiming at either their integration into mainstream, politically innocuous causes (using NGOs, the church or municipal initiatives, trying to deprive them of their political and self-managed character), or their suppression, often by violent means and with the assistance of the local government power, especially in the municipality of Athens.

central political level, and on the other hand, the difficulty of a durable commitment among participants, extended over larger periods of time.

e. The expression of a new politicization: *Street politics* and the question of political participation.

“People came crying. People came saying: ‘I always voted for ND, I had never participated in a protest, and now, with all this that is happening, I woke up’, and they cried in front of you. ‘And what was I doing all these years? I stayed on my sofa’. Things that make everything come upside down.” (137).

One of the most interesting elements of the protests of the 2010-2011 two-year period was their unification and their transformation into something more than an aggregation of resistances: these mobilizations became highly politicized in the sense of a new mode of politicization. Amid the rapid disintegration of the mainstream political forces, broad sectors of society started looking for new forms of practicing politics, separated from, and in certain cases in opposition to, traditional ones. These forms expressed a need for a re-appropriation of politics, a need for collective participation, for the creation of public spaces, spaces of social experimentation, of alternative counter-institutions. What is at stake here is a need for a “move to the political”, but not in mainstream or institutional terms; a move to politics outside its traditional forms of exercise; having *street politics* as its strong component. This new impulse opens up a possibility to reflect anew upon the political, beyond, and in contrast with, the focus of conventional politics operating solely in the legal-institutional sphere. This also presupposes a whole new type of political practice, rather than the simple intervention

within existing mechanisms. Obviously, a key point here is the definition of politics itself.

This approach constitutes the main argument of this thesis, and the perspective under which the transformation of the consciousness of protesters is examined. Contrary to an hypothesis of the masses being against politics, or incapable of exercising it, the approach adopted in this thesis considers the masses indeed capable of exercising politics, at all levels of political organization; a theoretical formulation that will be empirically evaluated in chapter V and further analyzed in chapter VI. This capacity implies that the political character of a movement is not restricted to its program or demands, nor to its repertoire of action. According to Rancière, the political character of a movement is mainly related to finding spaces of action, of discourse and thought, exceeding the mere affirmation of a concrete group (2011: 156-7). It actually refers to constructing processes of debate and praxis, and self-organized spaces, pursuing a different way of organizing society. In this respect, the public sphere is expanded, and people's participation is effected in less mediated ways. Thus, the political, in this sense, may question even fundamental aspects of official politics. Protesters, especially in Syntagma square, have managed “to inhabit a public space, day and night, and to organize it around a collective political interrogation” (Gourgouris 2011). From this perspective, Vradis' summing up of events (2011: 215) seems relevant in suggesting that, on the one hand, “lower square” protesters, speaking more directly of a radical transformation of the governance system and of the way we comprehend and live our lives, encapsulated this view of the political. On the other hand, “upper square protesters”, contrary to an argument frequently heard about them being non-political or even anti-political, were actually adopting a more conventional perception of politics, addressing their claims to the state and the government. They therefore sought a change of policy or even the resignation of the government and its replacement by another one, without initially questioning the basic principles underlying the conventional concepts of how politics is exercised.

This perspective however must not be perceived in an absolute way, since the political experience of these actors transformed and radicalized their views and perceptions, at least partially. In a poll conducted in July 2011, immediately after the movement of the squares, 78% claimed to actively discuss politics, with only 21% responding negatively. There was also an overall mistrust of the two systemic parties: 91% of respondents claimed being dissatisfied by the government (PASOK) and 89% by the main opposition (ND), while 71% stated that neither a PASOK nor a ND government would be good for the country¹⁸⁴ (Public Issue 2011). Therefore, during these protests, politics actually returned to the level of daily discourse and debates, even among people showing little prior interest in it. As a participant in the squares movement aptly noted, "People were talking politically; and were open to listening to every opinion and line of argument" (Stavrou 2011: 36).

This perception of politics is far from irrelevant to the deep political crisis in Greece. This crisis refers specifically to the deadlock and to the contradictions inherent to parliamentary democracy as such, but more concretely to its dysfunctioning in the contemporary Greek context. People acted in the way described by Tilly; when the established democratic institutions consistently undermined their own purported role and the situation became intolerable for a large proportion of ostensible participants. Thus, the only way to act was to step outside the established framework of political governance and engage in different practices better able to serve this role (Tilly 1994: 13). Our field research, to be presented in the next chapter, revealed that participants tend to locate the problem in the specific functioning of the Greek political system rather than questioning the structure of the system as such, to a greater degree than expected. In any case, the movements contributed in the exposure of the fundamental flaws of the present political model and the potential of a viable alternative.

¹⁸⁴ In the same poll, only 34% thought elections were necessary at the time (although this was a greater proportion than previously), whilst 60% responded negatively. Such a response may be interpreted in several ways, but is mainly related to the lack of concrete alternatives, the de-legitimation of the official political scene, and the weakness of the Left to intervene in this crisis of political representation. It is also related to the ideological hegemony of an effort trying to frighten people based on a supposed chaos induced by elections.

The forms of action that were adopted are consistent with this concept of politics. The repertoires of action in the protests involve what has been called a “direct-democratic action repertoire”, consisting of “mobile phone action call, creation of blogs, collection of signatures, launching of referendums, extensive use of youtube, facebook, twitter, to expose, communicate and coordinate, public space camping/campaigns. The main characteristic of this form of action is that it is decisively decentralized and horizontal. Its adherents are distrustful of political parties, bureaucratic organizations, and the system of representation in general. Direct democratic repertoire of action can sometimes be conventional, disruptive or violent, but is neither exclusively attached to convention, disruption or violence, nor categorically excludes anyone of these forms” (Kanellopoulos 2012: 13). One of the much debated novelties of these movements has been the use of new means of communication, of social media, of digital means etc. This choice is related both to the profile of the actors (people familiar with such tools, the youth, workers under a new division of labour and flexible working relations etc.), and to the crisis of political representation, which has also affected the traditional networks of political representation. The logic of those means (their network nature, their emphasis on functions from below and the abolition of the distinction between transmitter and receiver) indeed leads us into a different world of organizing social relationships.

It is the case that during the movement of the squares, and especially among the “lower square” participants, this perception has also led to a certain “fetishism of participation”, as Gerbaudo has defined it when referring at the diverse movements of the squares (Gerbaudo 2016: 142). This distortion derived from a particular kind of rigid proceduralism characterizing assemblies, often leading to a deadlock due to “the stubborn adherence to principles of consensus turning decision-making into an extremely painstaking process” (Ibid.: 143). This has sometimes led to assemblies becoming ineffective, constantly running over time, and often incapable of arriving at any decisions. In addition, it frequently led to conflicts among participants, on whether they should prioritize democracy or efficiency. These limitations have sometimes left a

legacy of disappointment or disillusionment that participants themselves have been reluctant to acknowledge (Ibid.: 142). This “fetishism of participation” failed to acknowledge the limitations in the availability of the actors or in their will to participate in permanent public consultation processes, due to material (limited free time, economic problems), ideological and cultural reasons (fatigue, frequently observed in mass mobilization processes, individualism etc.)¹⁸⁵ (Mpelantis 2011). As Gerbaudo noted, “Considering participation the highest of goods, they [activists] have ended up developing an unrealistic view of people's effective material possibility to participate, as well as of their desire to participate. While this principle contains emancipatory possibilities, it easily runs the risk of being conjoined with an individualistic drive that sees the experience of individual participants as the higher good, higher than the commitment to collective decisions” (Gerbaudo 2016: 146). This individualistic drive is vividly confirmed in my field work, and will be presented in chapter V. The weaknesses of the assembly-model had also to do with the difficulties in applying their mode of functioning to larger audiences or over longer time spans. In another vein, assemblies have often functioned as psycho-therapeutic processes where people felt able to express themselves, share their feelings or their thoughts, independently of their contribution to a collective cause or their ability to collaborate with others – with the risk of “problematic narcissistic implications” (Ibid.: 145). The sense of the political deadlock described above, amid the generalized political crisis and the lack of spaces in which citizens felt they could be heard, accentuated their need to express themselves; assemblies often played that role, to the detriment of their organizational outputs.

Despite these critiques and limitations (to be further discussed below), these are processes which have indeed contributed in the rearrangement of people's perception of politics, and of their own political participation, conceptualizing the political as an active determination. A more participatory conception of politics was at work,

¹⁸⁵ This point was evident in people's perception as well. According to (15): “*This whole thing needs people who are very organized, very informed, very selfless, because it needs too much time and effort and energy. So it is hard for someone, if she works 10 hours a day, as the average person does, of the private sector ok, to participate in all this. A student, an unemployed, a self-employed, a public employee will participate more.*” Simply to add however: “*Of course, now that we discuss it and I'm thinking of it, all those people are too many, they are probably enough.*”

transforming the ways people position themselves in the broader political field. This is a key point for this research, to which we will return in the next two chapters. One last point will be raised here, with respect to the relation between the socioeconomic and the political level. This debate is relevant, since certain interpretations of the movement of the squares have led either to the underestimation of the political factor or to an over-politicization that discounts the importance of the economic factor¹⁸⁶. With regard to its underestimation, the most obvious example comes from purely orthodox Marxist approaches, which have often neglected the importance of the political grievances of the people and the severity of the crisis in political representation. The analysis of the KKE in this whole period characterizes this tendency. The KKE has insisted claiming that the whole political personnel represents the same interests, antagonistic to the working class, thus the only cleavage emerging is between the working class and the dominant class. This mode of thought has completely underestimated ideology and the broader field of the political, and has ended up in an approach where economic interests are apparently directly reflected at the political level: thus the schema of “many parties, two policies”, the one policy supposedly expressed by the KKE and representing the working class, and the other one by all the other parties, representing the interests of the dominant class. In such an interpretation, the political nature of grievances is discounted and fully subordinated to the economic field.

The lack of emphasis on the economic and social crisis on the other hand, often originates from a focus solely on democratic demands and organization (eg. Gourgouris 2011; Xristina L. 2011). In these approaches, democracy is posited as simply a moral (or even political, in the narrow sense) imperative, and not in relation to social structures and the economic base. This perception does not simply underestimate the socio-economic factors, it also undervalues the depth and impact of political and democratic demands. Democracy is not simply a mode of political power but a self-transforming process; thus materiality of the socioeconomic relations is not

¹⁸⁶ I argue that this is not actually an “either/or” relationship. The perspective of this thesis, on the dialectical relationship between the economic and the political factor, in which the economic one is the *determinative in the last instance*, and on the role of the political, will further clarify this statement.

inherently opposed to political ideals of democracy. A higher type of unity between the two is necessary, not as extraneously connected but as integral parts of the same whole. Such an approach may respond both to the depth of the crisis and the complexity of mobilization. This is of course a theoretical challenge. I argue that protesters have actually constituted attempts to deal with this challenge, though these attempts have remained incomplete. The responsibility for this incompleteness is mainly related to the deficiencies of the political organizational forms intervening in the movement, and particularly of the Left. At this particular point, the statement of an elderly interviewee was astonishing in her perception of this linkage between the social situation and democracy: *“Our contributions for the medicines have increased. So, I do not care if a medicine has cheapened, since I pay double the price for it and since my salary... if someone looks at my salary, they would spit on it, they would not even touch it, and I cannot cope with my life. I must give my whole salary for medications, the moment I receive it. Thus... is there a democracy? There is no democracy!”* (I7).

Indeed, in my perspective, activists in the movement focused neither exclusively on their economic hardships nor simply on political demands. The latter held a prominent position, especially in the movement of the squares (much less in strikes, as expected), but an interesting linkage between the two seemed to develop, both in terms of people's perception of the situation and at the level of demands, discourse, and forms of action and organization. The specific relation of these movements to the whole field of the economy needs to be clarified. Opposition to the memoranda has been a key point, since it encompassed both political and economic demands¹⁸⁷. Frames referring to both the economic and the political context prevailed: the demands for bold actions to improve the economic situation co-existed with opposition to corruption and the hollowing out of contemporary democracy. The broadly known (or feared) and denounced by the protesters, role of the IMF had a prominent position among the motives for participation. The majority of my interviewees explicitly referred

¹⁸⁷ These demands were quite specific. As (I5) claimed: *“In the Grigoropoulos [December 2008] events, protests had a more or less symbolic character. Meaning that you did not have a concrete demand. While the “outraged” were specifically against the memorandum, they had one, two, three, specific demands. This had a more political character... it had the form of demands”*.

negatively to it, while more than a quarter of them mentioned specifically the subjection of the country to the IMF as a motive for their participation. According to statements that followed a certain pattern, interviewees stated being familiar with IMF policies in other countries, and being motivated to participate the moment they heard that the IMF would intervene in the country: according to (I10), *“I was scared of the IMF. When I heard 'IMF' I immediately thought 'madness will prevail'”*.

General political slogans (mainly against the memoranda and the debt) prevailed over direct labour ones (referring to wages, labour conditions etc.), including the investigation of a potential of constructing an alternative strategic goal for the country (in the form of “constructing a new Greece”)¹⁸⁸. Further, protests did not have an explicit class connotation, in the sense of targeting directly major business interests¹⁸⁹: frustration was primarily against politicians, and through them, against economic interests which “are hidden behind them” (a pattern often repeated among the interviewees). However, I would not claim that protesters dealt with corruption between political and economic interests only in terms of “cheating” or establishing an illegal confusion: there was a deeper comprehension of politicians expressing specific interests over others, in terms of class interests, mainly articulated as a pattern opposing “the rich, those who are above” and “the poor, the people, those who are below and exploited”. Another reaction was an assessment that politics as such were losing importance: *“Economic interests are behind everything! All those who are up there? They are servants of others who hide behind them!”* (I19). This constitutes in my perspective an existing class dimension. On the other hand, class discourse is indeed always latent and indirect in class societies: the main issue at stake is whether this is articulated in class consciousness, a point to be explored in the next chapters.

The above relation between economic and political demands is confirmed by my fieldwork; forcing me to give here an idea of its findings regarding this specific point.

¹⁸⁸ This was more evident in central political protests, and in the squares' movement par excellence. On the contrary, in strikes in specific sectors or businesses, concrete direct demands were the ones motivating the people to go on strike, prevailing over general ones (see footnote 152 for an overview of these demands).

¹⁸⁹ In the form of older protests, or those of other countries, which targeted directly specific businessmen. However, this is also due to a consciousness of the battle as a broader one, interrelated to international centres of power.

According to the vast majority of participants, their initial motives for participating were the worsening of their economic and social situation and opposition to the memoranda. (I27) claimed characteristically: *“Let me tell you this. If the situation did not touch on people’s wallets and their lives, nothing would happen. ... Because in the end of the day, everything is about how we live. If we live ok, we do not care. If we do not live ok, then everything is discussed. This whole debate, of how will we change, comes from the fact that our lives are awful, in conclusion.”* For (I28), people protested *“against the memoranda of course. And against the government, and against all the things that those people voted for, and those laws they applied in detriment of those protesting. This was it. The rage that they had at least something in common. After all, everyone participating, regardless their political ideology, suffered. Some more, some less, but they all suffered from these specific policies and they went out in the streets to express it.”* Three main reasons seem to have sustained participation: (1) the continuously deteriorating economic situation¹⁹⁰; (2) massiveness and innovation in protests combined with a sense that things might actually change; and (3) the broader political dissatisfaction. Further, economic demands constituted an initial explicit motivation, while political ones followed. This is a pattern that is repeated in many interviews¹⁹¹, creating a very interesting potential for a unification on a higher level of economic and political demands. This point is also evident in the various structures of organization (solidarity networks, working groups etc.), which have deliberately included both the need for a concrete, material response to people’s actual needs, and another concept of participation and self-organization, leading to a dialectical transcendence of the distinction between the social and the political.

The political representations emerging in the following period also confirm such a claim, since the strengthening of the Left (basically through support for SYRIZA¹⁹²), has expressed both the people’s need for an alternative political plan, including “political

¹⁹⁰ According to (I7), *“For four years now, we go through the same torture. And instead of getting better, it gets worse. We’ve lost our patience, we’ve lost our laughter, everybody is sad, others take medication, others are have mental health issues. This is not nice. This thing. Something must be done eventually.”*

¹⁹¹ Indicatively, clearly in I1, I8, I10, I11, I16, I19, I23, I27, I28.

¹⁹² Partisan representations have not been in the core interest of this research. However, certain key points will be examined in the next chapters and in the conclusions.

purification”, and fairer policies on the socio-economic level, reducing exploitation and inequalities. The social cleavages that have been produced after the mobilizations under study, also confirm, in our view, the intensification of the class features of social polarization, peaking in the conduct of the referendum in 2015. Of course, this has not been a linear process: on the contrary, it has consisted of a path beset by controversies, contradictions, containments and reversals. These problems are clearly linked to two key factors: on the one hand, the central political developments, and, on the other hand, the weakness of the organized trade-union movement and its inability to play a leading role over the whole of this period, it being the most directly class-oriented force. These are points to which I intend to return.

To conclude this chapter, these movements re-established a feeling of ordinary people getting an opportunity to participate in political life, together with the exercise of politics in a new way. This is a rather revolutionary concept of politics, in which movements function as social laboratories, allocating space for social interaction, experimenting with new ideas and innovative social norms and codes, coming into live contact with creative and collective processes. Movement activists have had the opportunity to explore the concrete effects of contesting established norms while simultaneously testing new ones (Della Porta 2009: 20). This point refers both to the exacerbation of the crisis of political representation, of legitimation of the state and the institutions (its depth to be proven in detail in my fieldwork, presented in the next chapter), and to the material formulation of alternative ways of conducting politics. Citizens become this way active rather than passive, they re-establish their social identities bringing concrete political results. As Douzinas notes, “What [the Syntagma movement] has left is that it has reversed citizens' passivity, their belief, that is, that democracy and politics are effected somewhere else, outside of our lives, and change nothing” (Douzinas 2012). This assessment means, first and foremost, a repudiation of the notions that define politics as only existing in their official and institutionalized forms. On the contrary, politics are conceived in a broader, thus more proper and substantial, meaning.

Bearing these remarks in mind, and having examined in detail the movements of the chosen period and their concrete features, I shall now pass on to the analysis of the findings of the field research I conducted through interviews with participants of these movements. These interviews aimed at empirically exploring the extent and depth of the issues posited: the importance of political participation; the perception of the political; its connection with the crisis of political representation and the extent of the crisis of legitimation of the state and its apparatuses. The aim was to explore both the crisis of hegemony of capitalism in Greece and the potential for new ways of social and political engagement. Most importantly, I intended to investigate the role of political participation in movements in the transformation of people's consciousness. The theoretical connotations of this point will be further explored in chapter VI.

CHAPTER V: POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS TRANSFORMATION. THE OUTCOMES OF THE FIELD RESEARCH

In the previous chapter, I have presented and examined in detail the social movements that developed in Greece during the first period of the crisis, in all their forms and features, placing emphasis on the question of political participation. In this fifth chapter of the thesis, I will present my field work and its outcomes. This first section will start with some remarks about the methodology, including the presentation of the main features of the fieldwork, a brief discussion about qualitative research in general and the reasons it was chosen, as well as a presentation of my sample. In the section that follows, before considering the analysis of the basic data from my field research, I will present some initial results on political determination and identity attribution, which are relevant regarding the question of perceiving the political by the people. Subsequently, I will analyze responses related to political participation in movements, including motivation, subsequent involvement after a first participation, and a general overview on certain issues connected with participation (use of violence, existence of social discrimination). In the fourth section of the chapter I will discuss the extent and depth of the delegitimation of the political system, as became evident from the interviews, including the extent this involved both systemic parties and the Left. Then, I will deal with similar perspectives relating to the state and the institutions, including the police, official trade-unionism, the media and the EU. Section e presents the results of posing the question of consciousness transformation directly to participants in interviews, regarding participation per se and its effects on various levels. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I will examine the political perspective of participation, in respect to an allegedly inevitable institutionalization of conflict, the formation of a political alternative and the role of political forms in this process.

a. Methodological remarks and sample.

Starting with an explanation of the methodology of my research, the data presented below are extracted from a body of field research that included 40 semi-structured interviews, conducted in the years 2013 and 2014¹⁹³. Before the presentation of the data, it should be noted that the time context of the interviews was obviously a major factor influencing the tendencies and findings presented here. The period from spring 2012 until the parliamentary elections in early 2015 was defined by a shift in the confrontation with the authorities and in people's expectations at the parliamentary level, combined with the worsening of the socio-political situation and a relative decline in the activity of movements. This period was characterized by the development of individualistic tendencies among the public and the implementation of neoliberal measures by the authorities together with the intensification of the social and economic deadlock. There was also a sharpening and hardening of governmental attitudes and actions, breaching the accepted democratic consensus in Greece and sometimes leading to undemocratic deviations.

The presentation that follows should be read bearing these elements in mind. In choosing the topic and the methodology for this thesis, the nature of the chronological context for the interviews and the effect this might have, was, of course, taken into consideration. This has been one of the parameters in defining the research targets of the present study. Since our main objective is the examination of consciousness transformation in relation to political participation, it was crucial to examine the self-evaluation of this transformation in the period *after* the rise and escalation of movements, when feelings aroused by the intensity, optimism and emotional upheaval of the events had settled. On the other hand, there was also the danger of this being a period of extreme pessimism, disillusionment in the strength and importance of movements and their effects, and a shift in attention and emphasis to different

¹⁹³ For the conduct of this research, full ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee, approval number REP-H/12/13- 26.

processes (the elections, the official political scene etc.). All these factors must be kept in mind when evaluating the results of this qualitative research. However, it should be stated right from the outset that, despite the existence of these tendencies, the participants' evaluation of movements and their effects were more positive than expected.

Further, the methodology chosen did not aim at a quantitative approach which although statistically measurable, would have failed to differentiate the population studied¹⁹⁴. In contrast, the sample was chosen so as to provide an opportunity to investigate forms and effects of political participation; interviewing people who belonged to different social groups, especially with reference to their previous participation and engagement. More specifically, the crucial point of this research concerns the study of various forms of political participation and the transformation of people's consciousness in relation to this participation and experience (particularly regarding the objective circumstances, their own social position in society, and ways of conceptualizing the "political"). I am specifically interested in the development of new relationships between people and politics and in their relationship with various forms of political representation (either existing or emerging). Thus, the sample was chosen focusing on people with little or no prior relationship to politics and activism, and, more specifically, non-members of political organizations or parties at the time of their participation (and, for the vast majority, nor when the interview was conducted). This criterion ensured that the interviewees had participated in movements from personal motivation and not due to allegiance to any political group. It also provided the opportunity to study the transformational effects of participation, since the chosen sample had come to participation as a relatively new experience.

Therefore, I chose to use a qualitative methodology in the light of the nature of the research question and my particular approach to it. This research is basically targeted at investigating and understanding non-countable and non-quantifiable elements of social phenomena and of social behaviour (Hay 2000). On the other hand, as

¹⁹⁴ I support the claim that quantitative research involves important limitations, which prevent the acquirement of detailed elements, in comparison to qualitative analysis (Kasimati 2004).

suggested in the Introduction of the thesis, and to avoid a strictly empirical approach, data from the interviews, personal representations and individual meanings are examined in parallel and relation to the particular context in which they are posited, the particular socio-economic and political conditions and mechanisms which produce and reproduce social reality (Apostolopoulou 2009: 41). Further, individual consciousness is approached as interwoven with and reflecting each individual's position in the broader social organization and dominant ideology; and not as if they existed independently from these crucial factors.

The main technique employed included the conduct of in-depth interviews involving a number of both general and more concrete questions on issues predetermined by the researcher, without a strict order or formulation. The researcher's presence was helpful to the respondent (to clarify the question or her thought etc.) and to provide slight guidance where necessary (Paraskevopoulou-Kollia 2008). The semi-structured form of the interviews allowed the deepening of particular theoretical points in the course of individual interviews and from one interview to another, creating a reflexive process for the researcher as well. Thus, the interview structure remained flexible, the questions were quite broad and the questionnaires were readjusted throughout the period of the interviews¹⁹⁵, whilst discussion with the respondent was relatively free to transcend the limits of a stricter, conventional approach, without compromising its basic targets (Apostolopoulou and Pantis 2010: 986). We took pains to avoid replicating or confirming a preconceived pattern, in which interviews would simply validate a theoretical schema already consciously or unconsciously in the researcher's mind. On the contrary, theory was constructed progressively, in parallel with data analysis, and the main conclusions of the research, and its specific focus, were formulated during the research itself. According to Maxwell, far from simply a source of additional concepts for the theory, this method provides the researcher with an understanding of the meaning that these phenomena and events have for the actors who are involved in them, and the perspectives that inform their actions (Maxwell 2008:

¹⁹⁵ Therefore, a part of data analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection (Maxwell 2008: 236).

228). In data elaboration, microanalysis formed the first step in order to locate and efficiently develop the range of potential meanings emerging from the interviews (Apostolopoulou and Pantis 2010: 988). Subsequently, a stage of analytical elaboration enabled the identification of relationships with the broader socio-political environment. Codification in data analysis was made according to the method of data grouping, following the main axes of the research questions of interest, in order to form specific categories/frames. After defining thematic categories based on our main research questions, the whole material from the interviews was re-elaborated from the perspective of each separate category, and then re-categorized under these main categories. Thus an open-coding approach helped to progressively identify key themes and sub-themes. This was a challenging process: frame analysis is a useful method for investigating multiple interpretations, nevertheless categorization and analysis present several obstacles to be overcome, including both unconsciously imposing the researcher's point of view, and missing the central axis and target of the research, thus losing orientation within a chaos of data. These challenges were successfully overcome by a combination of methods: formulating main frames according to the basic research question, encouraging respondents to prioritize the most important elements by themselves, constantly clearing off data which seemed interesting but could not be inserted in the main frames of interest¹⁹⁶ etc. At the same time, in the transcription and the elaboration of interviews, particular attention was given to the extra-verbal communication, interviewees' reactions, hesitations, difficulties in understanding or responding to certain questions, misunderstandings, perplexity etc.

In terms of constituting the sample, the main strategy followed was purposeful sampling: "a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well

¹⁹⁶ At this point, it should be noted that interviews were scheduled to last forty-five minutes to one hour, but there was a previously unexpected willingness on the part of respondents to continue the discussion, to recall memories, to narrate stories and to deviate from the main axes of the discussion. This finding is discussed below and is quite interesting. Many interviewees expressed very positive personal feelings about that period, and said they enjoyed talking about it: indicatively, in the end of the interviews, the vast majority did not let me thank them; instead, many thanked me back for giving them the opportunity to remember/think/speak of the time. Eg. (I12): "No, no, it was my pleasure, this was one of my happiest periods, and for me the interview was a chance to speak, to express my opinion, and I am glad that there is someone to listen to it".

from other choices” (Maxwell 2008: 235). The technique employed went as follows: I started by finding a sufficient first circle of people using my personal contacts and by broadly circulating a “Call For Interview” via emails and social networks. In a similar fashion, I contacted several social centres, working clubs and unions in working places, active during the strikes I was interested in, and other scholars who were working on similar subjects and had conducted interviews with members of committees in local/civil disobedience movements etc. In the suite, using the “snowball technique”, I asked people I interviewed to recommend other acquaintances to me. Being aware of the limitations of this technique (mainly that the recruited participants are likely to come from the same network, have similar motivations for participation and views), I avoided using multiple recommendations from the same person (in most cases, I asked each person to recommend one contact, and no more). Moreover, since the study covers different movements in the context of a certain period, I tried to find people that had participated in a range of different movements, focusing mostly on the squares' movement (whose main characteristics are significantly associated with my research questions), and, secondarily, in the various strikes taking place during the period in question. Finally, I have chosen to present the findings from the interviews uniformly, without distinguishing among interviewees participating in different forms of the social movement of the period (and mainly between those participating in strikes and in the squares' movement). This choice is mainly due to two reasons: firstly, the overall perspective of this thesis wishes to cope with movements in a rather uniform manner, identifying common patterns in relation to our main questions. Secondly, because of the character of the interviewees (people with no prior organized political engagement), most of them have participated simultaneously in most different forms (eg. strikers who were also active in the squares' movement) and have elaborated on the various questions during the interviews based on this uniform experience.

Of course, even though in qualitative methodology we are not interested in quantitative figures and a proportional distribution of the sample, I have tried to achieve a relative representativeness, with respect to gender, age group, education level and

region of residence (as related to class position)¹⁹⁷. Having said that, I did not attempt to represent all categories, but rather those of greater prominence in the composition of what we could call “the Greek people” (mostly in terms of class structure and education level) and those particularly significant for my research. Thus, as far as age groups are concerned, I mostly focused on the group aged 26-35, since younger people played an important role, both in the movements and in the emergence of new relationships with politics, and those 36-45/46-55, representing those strata formed in the context of the relative stability of the period 1990-2000 and now facing a virtually total collapse, not only in their way of life, but also in their conceptions of political representation.

Finally, anonymity was respected, though the vast majority of the interviewees did not ask for it, or even stated, when informed that the interviews would be anonymous, that they didn't mind either way. Some indicative, categorized figures of the sample are presented below, in Tables 1-5¹⁹⁸:

GENDER	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES
Female	18
Male	22

Table 1: Gender distribution of the sample

AGE	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES
18-25	1
26-35	18
36-45	12
46-55	8
56+	1

Table 2: Age distribution of the sample

¹⁹⁷ In the sense that in qualitative methodology we do ensure that chosen respondents constitute characteristic, typical cases and represent the main categories of the population – or the main categories of interest for the research (Kedra 2008: 2).

¹⁹⁸ All the data are presented in detail in the Appendix.

EDUCATION LEVEL	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES
Primary	3
Secondary	7
Higher/post-secondary	7
University graduates	15
Post-graduates (Master and PhD graduates)	8

Table 3: Education level of the sample

WORKING STATUS	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES
Employees/wage labourers	16
Self-employed	8
Precarious workers	7
Unemployed	6
Pensioners	2
Students	1

Table 4: Working status of the sample

REGION OF RESIDENCE	NUMBER OF INTERVIEWEES
Wider centre of Athens	11
In dilapidated suburbs of the broader centre	6
Western suburbs	8
Piraeus and suburbs	2
Northern suburbs	9
Southern suburbs	2
Outside Athens	2

Table 5: Region of residence of the sample

Given the data and requirements of my research, this sample can be considered as satisfactory. Data saturation, in the sense of finding frequencies in responses and recycling same concepts, started to grow after approximately thirty interviews. Lastly, the sample does not simply validate the representativeness, but is also indicative of the strata that participated in the movements and were willing to participate in relevant research (explaining in part a greater enthusiasm regarding participation among interviewees). Thus, the over-representation of the youth for example is less a sign of bias in the research and more a sign of the strata that considered it more useful to

participate, both in the movement and in such a study. Moreover, participants' class position is a reflection of the current class structure of the society and the class composition of the movements, considering of course that this sample concerns those who have participated in the movements, and not society as a whole. Two main elements of over-representation resulted from the above sampling: firstly, there is a significant proportion of the unemployed and of precarious workers. Secondly, there is an over-representation of university graduates (twenty-three out of forty) and even of people holding masters and PhDs (postgraduate studies), who are twice as numerous as those coming just from primary education backgrounds (eight against three). These two points are significant for studying the class composition of participants, in relation to the Greek class structure as presented in chapter III, to be dealt with in more detail later.

b. Political self-determination and identity attribution.

Before considering the concrete analysis of the data collected in the main corps of the interviews, it is interesting to study the answers given in the question referring to political self-determination. The question was specifically: *“Speaking of politics in general, where would you place yourself on a scale of 1 to 10, if 1 is the extreme left and 10 is the extreme-right?”*. This is a relatively simple and typical question in questionnaires, related to sample distribution rather than the main objective of each research. However, interesting conclusions can be elicited at this point. Firstly, there was a significant reluctance to answer the question. Some participants claimed difficulty in positioning themselves, others rejected having a label or identity attributed to them, while others questioned the definition itself and the distinction between the Left and the Right, and a few declined to answer from an ultra-Left/anarchist perspective. Many even expressed annoyance: *“Nowhere! Don’t put me in these things!”* (I15). This finding is thought to be related to the broad crisis of political

representation, and is revealing about the depth of this crisis at the time, since the existing political identities, once accepted as given norms and reference points, are now under challenge and appear ever more tenuous. At the same time, no new such identities seem to be created.

Secondly, when eventually responding, most participants tended to self-position themselves towards the left side of the scale; to a larger extent than my general evaluation of their political perspective from the whole interview would have indicated. In short, they tended to consider themselves more easily as part of the broader Left spectrum¹⁹⁹. This is due to many factors related to concrete features of the Greek social formation at the social, political and historical level. Prominent among these is a strong left historical narrative that has influenced Greek society and especially its more militant sectors, a relative hegemony of the Left in certain sectors of society²⁰⁰, the centrality of the leftist culture and ideology, a broad social legitimization of the militant, combative and partly confrontational character of the Left, and a strong division and political polarization of society historically still, to an extent, reproducing the legitimization of its militant character.

In the same vein, similar difficulties were revealed about stating in which social class participants would place themselves. Most felt confused when asked, tried to clarify the meaning of the question or expressed difficulty in responding. Many gave vague answers tending to describe a broader category than the one defined by class, mainly as “workers”. Indicatively, (I1) responded “*I don't know – in the one most of us are in maybe?*”. Further, it was far easier to state being a “worker” than a “proletarian/member of the working class”²⁰¹. Unemployment was the most concrete

¹⁹⁹ See Table 1 in the Appendix for the analytical figures. Aside the fact that none of the participants posited herself in the scale 7-10 -towards the Right- (a fact which is however quite expected, especially since the answers refer to the identity participants chose to attribute to themselves, and especially in the context of a research like this one), the answers were as follows (though, in some cases, with significant hesitance): 1 (5), 2 (3), 3 (8), 4 (2), 5 (9), 6 (2), left-wing in general (3), anarchist (1), resisting any classification (7).

²⁰⁰ This refers to particularly those related to social mobilization, a point that partly explains the weakness of the far-right and of the fascist GD in acquiring an important reference to the streets and to movementist processes.

²⁰¹ It should be kept in mind that in Greek there is a distinction in terminology between the more general term “worker” [ergazomenos] and the more concrete “member of the working class” [ergatis], the second referring directly to a leftist terminology and not broadly used. The second also refers almost exclusively to manual labour, perhaps even more than a sense of belonging to the working class. It is therefore inconceivable for a “white collar” worker to define herself as an [ergatis].

category to be easily stated, and most participants focused on working conditions rather than class identity (salaried, self-employed, employer etc.). These findings show, in our view, an underestimation of certain analytical tools, used basically by the Left (even of class analysis itself), in people's perception. This is due to three main reasons; firstly, the dominance of the neoliberal ideology in the 1990s' which worked methodically on deconstructing class theory. Secondly, the insistence of the Left in using what is thought to be "stereotyped language", which has led to a certain underestimation of some of its analytical tools, both in terms of discourse and analysis²⁰². And thirdly, the relatively low weight of the organized trade-union and labour movement in the protests, along with its deficiencies as examined in the previous chapters. Indeed, this is the only component of the movement explicitly organized along class lines, and its more active presence as such would have influenced the identity, discourse and orientation of the whole movement in terms of its class dimension. However, even if not used as such in terms of discourse, the actual meaning of what class theory defines is reflected as indirect descriptions in most participants' views. For example, a large proportion of them refer explicitly or implicitly to exploitation, or to an identity based on those who come "from below".

This difficulty in adopting an identity was obvious during the whole set of interviews. To the question "*As for your own participation, did you feel to participate on the basis of an identity? As a Greek, a leftist, a worker? Another?*", the majority responded negatively. Almost everybody stated their participation as "*a citizen*", or as "*an individual*". Some also included their identity as "*workers*"; these answers coming mainly from wage labourers, or those working under precarious conditions, but also by some self-employed (I6, I7, I9, I13 etc.). Such reluctance is related to a weakness in describing a common identity in strict terms: eg, (I36) responded "*as a simple person*", whilst (I28) stated to have participated "*as an aggrieved and desperate and indignant*".

²⁰² This is certainly changeable based on political participation. A participant who had no relationship whatsoever with politics, and considered herself being deeply politicized through her participation, claimed when speaking of her past: "*I thought that there are certain words, which are used again and again, without me being able to... to bring them in my life, in my reality, words that I now understand... For example, 'class struggle'! It was like a key-word, but without me understanding its meaning. Today I don't consider it as a mistaken expression, on the contrary. Back then, I could not understand it. I didn't have the information. So everytime I heard it, I felt really annoyed!*"

(I33) stated characteristically the main reason why adopting such an identity seemed problematic: *“If I chose an identity besides the one of a citizen, I would segregate participants, as if saying that some people should not have participated or that some people are unaffected by the situation”*. These findings confirm the need for unification (of *participants* and not of the society as a whole, based on the need to avoid internal fragmentation in various levels), but mostly the prevalence of a certain individualism in the popular perception (consistent with Gerbaudo's findings, in 2016: 146, presented in chapter IV). This was evident in the whole atmosphere of most interviews: while participants spoke highly of political participation and of the movements, they also seemed to have internalized important aspects of the neoliberal ideology with respect to individualism and “personal freedom”. This emerged as a core value for them, and the majority emphasized the importance of their personal freedom being respected concerning their decision to participate in the movements. This was one of the main reasons they gave for deciding to participate in the movement of the squares, when opposed to the other ones (namely, that they felt their personal autonomy to be respected). Furthermore, in this question it generally seemed easier for participants to adopt a vague political identity (mainly, “*leftist*”), than that of a concrete social position (eg. as a member of the working class), confirming an underestimation of the class dimension in people's minds.

As for national identity, in general it was less emphasized than expected. It was not easily adopted, and very few stated they felt they were participating in the movements as Greeks²⁰³. Such an identity, as an active determination, was relatively easily associated with fascism/racism and particularly with GD by many. This is evidently related to the concrete period of the interviews, characterized by a significant rise in the popularity of GD and a degree of polarization in Greek society²⁰⁴. It is indicative that,

²⁰³ One of those few who most clearly stated participating as Greek and a patriot, also expressed his preference for GD (I17). Others adopted Greek identity, but as a natural assessment rather than an active denotation.

²⁰⁴ There is a large debate on whether GD was strengthened by the squares' movement. We have opposed the claim that GD has intervened in the movement as such, in section c of chapter IV. However, the question on whether it has subsequently increased its electoral audience is a quite different one. A faction of all those people that have participated in some degree in the movement of the squares have turned towards GD, mainly because of its anti-memorandum rhetoric and its denunciation of the whole political system as such, two points that have been hegemonic in the popular

when asked, participants acknowledged this attribution as an *a posteriori* one (saying that at the time they did not consider flags and national slogans as related to GD, unlike the time of the interview). Many tended to identify the question with a part of the interview dealing with fascism in Greece, though I took pains not to pose the question in a phase when this linkage could be easily made²⁰⁵. Nevertheless, most of them disagreed with the expulsion of people displaying national symbols from the manifestations. They did not consider them as a priori competing groups; on the contrary, some of them said that they understood the need to participate with national symbols, mostly as an indication of a unified social mobilization.

One final remark on identity attribution should be made at this point. There was a certain hesitation among participants to identify themselves as organic or active members of the movement, mainly due to a certain self-effacement regarding their contribution, rather than a desire to distance themselves from the movement. In the relevant question (*"Did you feel like an active part of the movement or did you mostly participate as an observer?"*), only the most active ones identified themselves as such. Still, even those who I evaluated, from their overall image during the interview, as fairly organic members, tended to underestimate the importance of their personal contribution. This finding is symptomatic of the difficulty people felt in feeling firmly positioning within a collective identity, leading to a need to distance themselves in order to preserve certain individualistic values, as discussed in the findings above. Evidently, participants also thought of their participation as having a temporary nature, rather than signaling the start of a more durable commitment. This reluctance in commitment tended finally to reproduce the distinction between experts and followers, a well-known stereotype in politics. Of course, such depictions of the dominant ideology would be evident in participants in movements. One of the main aims of this thesis is to examine their transformation through political participation, its steps and grounds as well as its

perception of the fundamental problematic of the Greek situation. However, this turning towards GD has multiple parameters and cannot be easily or directly attributed to the movements (including the crisis of political representation, subjective deficiencies of the political system and of the Left, the way in which the establishment in Greece has dealt with the GD etc.). Further, a very significant section of the participants has been polarized against it, explaining the reflective reaction against it in the respective questions.

²⁰⁵ Eg. I had not previously implied anything about fascism or GD in previous questions.

limits. Reluctance in actively positing oneself as being in the leadership and/or the organic entity of a movement is the result of both the dominant view on politics and the real limitations of the movements in producing active engagement.

c. Participation in movements.

*“Syntagma square movement has been a huge injection
of hope and optimism in a broadly very dark landscape”
(131)*

As mentioned above, the sample chosen included people who had little or no prior relationship with politics and activism. Thus, for the majority of them participation in movements has been a relatively new experience. It is interesting to examine the motivations for this participation, as well as their views on the movements that developed. This section is basically related to the squares' movement (since this has been the one with the most innovative features) but includes, of course, other types of participants and of experiences. As far as initial information is concerned, most participants claimed to have been informed about the existence of mobilizations from the Internet and social networks, as well as by politicized friends and circles of acquaintances. Most of those participating in strikes were informed via their union. Thus, resources in terms of information are important, as expected, with alternative media playing a significant role. However, there is a distinction to be made here: in the squares' movement, information circulated with less clarity and was loosely network-based, confirming an individualistic and relatively disconnected tendency whereas in strikes, it came from the traditional and organized political networks. In the question regarding their decision to participate for the first time, most people tended to stress that this was a “conscious choice”, emphasizing its nature as a personal decision (and stating that they either went or would go, even alone) but also stating that participation

along with others from their close environment facilitated this choice (mostly in terms of having someone as company, and of being with someone they trusted in case of need). On the other hand, there was relative indifference towards activists or people not personally known as a motive for participation.

As for the various reasons given as a motivation for participation (already presented in chapter IV), the socio-economic situation, insecurity, economic deadlocks, politics of austerity and memoranda in particular were mentioned or implied as self-evident motivations; as were the political situation, and specifically authoritarianism and corruption, and indeed, the latter often emerged in a second phase. Thus, this fieldwork confirms a linkage between political and economic demands, since the dominant frames referred to both the economic and the political context. The challenging of acquired rights seems to recurrently emerge. Many attributed their participation and their state of mind (namely mainly rage and anger), to the latent political crisis that had accumulated over the previous years. Two additional motivations are interesting. Firstly, there was a repeated pattern of choosing to participate as a form of personal responsibility, a debt towards oneself, society and future generations (or even towards one's own children, especially among older participants – for example, I11, I13, I19). (I4) said in particular “*I felt ashamed not to participate. I just wanted to be there*”. This reaction is interesting in many respects: it shows that political participation is thought, even unconsciously, to be necessary as a response to the problems experienced at the time, including an element of *ethos*, and not simply material concerns. On the other hand, and in the way it was expressed, it also seems as an indirect acceptance of the futility of participation: it was presented as necessary *though* not particularly effective. This pattern was repeated when discussing self-evaluation of consciousness transformation through political participation (as will be examined in section f). Secondly, choosing to participate in the first place was often related to the specific features of the movements, particularly of the squares. As (I3) underlined: “*I needed something to pull me over, to excite me, to convince me*”. Many participants claimed to have decided to come in because of the movements' innovative characteristics

(*“enormously massive demonstrations”, “imaginative ways of protest”, “people of all social categories and ages participating”, “universality in opposition to strictly corporate interests”, “centrality of location”* etc.) and because of the fact that these were not protests called by political parties.

This latter point, important for many interviewees, is directly related to the crisis of political representation, which also affects the Left, and with which I will deal in detail in the next section. Different reactions came from interviewees in this respect: some set as a precondition for their participation the fact that political parties played little evident part, some stressed the fact that the presence of parties divides protesters and imposes differentiations, others stated that they preferred parties not to be present, although banning them seemed antidemocratic²⁰⁶, whilst many claimed the right of anybody to be present, saying that being all together is power for the movement²⁰⁷. Evidently, this was a firm debate among participants. Finally, a few claimed that previous manifestations of movements, mainly the student and the December 2008 revolt²⁰⁸, were a motive, regardless of whether they had participated themselves or not. Many also identified the development of respective movements abroad as a stimulus to participate. These movements, especially the Spanish “Indignados”, were often mentioned as an example spurring Greeks into mobilization at that specific period. Generally, there was a recognition of a certain connection with those various movements²⁰⁹, most participants however tended to underline their belief that these similarities were rather superficial, and that it was the Greek specificities which were credited with the emergence of the movements.

A certain pattern emerged on the question regarding their choice to continue participating in protests after their first involvement. Almost all interviewees emphasized

²⁰⁶ (128): *“Let me tell you my opinion: if they had let Left parties participate, I don't think that anything better would happen. But it was still bad that they didn't let them speak because, if you like, if you claim doing something democratic here, and especially direct democratic, I don't think that banning them fits this idea.”*

²⁰⁷ (112): *“I did not really care [if Left parties were present]. But I consider it... Yes, I consider it right for them to be there. Like everyone else. Who had no particular identity but finally in a way they obtained an identity since they became ‘the indignant’, let's say. So, I don't see why.. why should pre-existing identities not be able to participate.”*

²⁰⁸ (19): *“It was at the time that people learned to come into the streets and participate into protests”.*

²⁰⁹ Mainly that of Spain, less those of the Arab Spring or the Occupy movements.

the massiveness of protests, the heterogeneity of people participating (neither coming from particular social groups nor being the “usual suspects” of mobilizations) and innovation. The fact that different things were always happening, thus sustaining interest and engagement, was emphasized by many. Some claimed that there was a pervasive atmosphere and sense of feeling strong, motivating participation. These were also repeated as those features of the movements that appeared most remarkable to participants, in addition to spontaneity and people's persistence, as well as the extensive use of repression by the police, and its brutality. Three main axes emerged with respect to the choice to repeat participation: firstly, novelty and a feeling permeating the movements that individual participation is important and makes a difference (thus the specific features of the movements and their ability to engage people into acts that seem both interesting and meaningful). Secondly, the perceived attitude of the “enemy” as manifested through police repression but also by economic and political policies; and thirdly, the feeling that these protests were not directly instigated or manipulated by political parties. Regarding specific protests which were thought to be the most important, most interviewees claimed, or implied, that mobilizations represented in their minds a unified protest cycle, and not just a sum of different protests, some more, some less important. However, the first protest of the period, the May 5, 2010 strike, as well as the peaks of the squares' movement during the strike calls (June 15 and June 28-29), and the major GSEE-ADEDY strikes (for example, in October 19-20, 2011) were mentioned by many as the landmarks of the period.

Returning to the specific features of the movements contributing to people's activation, it is interesting to examine the way people spoke about them, and especially about the squares' movement. The language used here is revealing about personal activation, importance of collective action and re-legitimation of political participation. The squares were for interviewees “*a living organism*” (I14), a “*festival*” (I2), “*a constant celebration*” (I21), “*a small society*”, “*a small city built*” (I3, I24), “*the organization of a state*” (I24), “*part of our daily lives*” (I11), “*a life experiment*” (I12), “*a meeting place*”

(I31). The way interviewees spoke of the movement and their non-verbal behaviour is notable: almost all smiled, felt more relaxed when discussion reached that point, and many repeated phrases such as: “*I felt beautifully*” (I1), “*it was really really nice*” (I11), “*I felt happy*” (I21), “*I really felt things were... would be different*” (I21). (I23) said: “*I would recommend participation to others. This is a very good psychotherapy as well!*” Solidarity and a sense of comradeship were repeatedly stressed. Many emphasized the broader atmosphere (I11: “*the climate was playful*”) and particularly the socialization associated with mobilizations; the way people who were strangers communicated and talked to each other. Even though most participants claimed having retained new acquaintances after these protests, but not actual friendships, there were cases in which a pivotal influence on one's life was described, almost a Damascus moment²¹⁰. Further, relationships with the existing acquaintances and friends were also claimed as improved among people who participated in protests together²¹¹. When discussing with (I24) on this socialization during the movement, he conceptualized the communication between people taking place as follows: “*we were translating language from Greek to Greek*”. Further, the majority stated that they felt “*at last useful*”.

Such feelings were also expressed when speaking of the assemblies in Syntagma square. Two participants characteristically spoke of the assembly paralleling it to “*ecclesia of the demos*”, the principal assembly of the democracy of ancient Athens and a symbol of the foundation of democracy (I5 and I24). Almost all of them emphasized the democratic procedures, the open character, the ability of everyone to participate by either speaking or voting and contributing to the decision²¹². In general, the same positive attitude persisted towards the various working and thematic groups, with interviewees emphasizing their usefulness in three areas: firstly, helping to develop

²¹⁰ (I27) was the most indicative case, who met his future wife in these protests, and they got married a year later, on the first anniversary date of the movement. (I31) quit her job, and so did two of her friends, and they all together started their own business in a different sector. The interviewee, who used to work in a big firm in management, described her choice to quit as a direct outcome of the transformation of her consciousness because of her participation.

²¹¹ As (I3) claimed, “*I feel more tied to my own people since*”.

²¹² However, few participants stated that they had tried to speak or had actually spoken in an assembly. Some said characteristically that they chose not to speak because they felt having nothing more important to say than the others. Obviously, *feeling* being into a democratic environment does not automatically mean actually outdoing all hesitations originating from alienation from politics, or other sources.

social consciousness and solidarity, thus impacting on people's consciousness; secondly, offering material aid to people in need, helping movement's organization; and thirdly, contributing to sustaining the movement by solving problems that could have prevented people's participation. Indeed, these structures seem to appear quite effective on the material level as well, in the perception of the participants. In contrast, something frequently repeated about the assemblies is that they were quite democratic but not very effective. Many spoke of "*utopias*", of ideas that were neither realizable nor concrete, but expressed needs and thoughts that were "pure and beautiful" (I11). Discussions were thought to be "*interesting but inconclusive*" (I33). This is the main reason why most participants thought they were evanescent, along with deterioration stemming from fear (mostly of repression) and fatigue. The interviewees referred to a gradual decline in the quality of the assembly over time, combined with efforts by organized forces of the Left to intervene in order to influence its outcomes. Those practices of partisan manipulation and the gradual decline in participation were thought to have gradually facilitated bureaucratism, while the insistence on discussing every single detail ended up in a failure to prioritize important matters. Other relevant problems that have emerged from the interviews refer to the lack of coordination and communication between different groups, bureaucratic deviations even presented as democratic concerns, introversion and self-referential attitudes or practices appearing as those of a "determined centre" issuing calls to follow its instructions (also mentioned in Giovanopoulos 2011a: 58). These last two points are interesting in that many participants referred to the rejection of political organizations as a sign of such deviations, although they maintained a negative attitude towards these organizations: they often claimed their exclusion from participating as a sign of proprietorial behaviour on the part of the most active participants in the assemblies.

Another part of the interviews referred to people's perspectives, views and experience in movements on certain primary aspects of this participation (violence, various kinds of discrimination). As for discrimination based on gender or race in the context of movements, it was not identified by anyone. All the women were asked

whether they felt any discrimination: all replied negatively (although, one of them (I31) claimed to have witnessed sexist behaviours during the movement). There were many who did not understand or felt puzzled by the question, or thought of the matter as insignificant. Many seemed to have not been intimidated by this issue in their lives. Bearing in mind that gender discrimination is quite strong in Greek society on many levels²¹³, this reaction seems to reveal the adoption of the dominant sexist narrative rather than its repudiation. The few who did identify with the question, distinguished between the discrimination they feel in their everyday lives, and a certain lack of similar discrimination during the movement. A woman interviewee, active in the Keratea movement, emphasized that in the movement there was a “women assembly”, which she considered “really innovative” (I26)²¹⁴. The same goes with racial discrimination, about which all respondents replied that they felt there was no discrimination based on race²¹⁵.

On violence, responses tended to be both contradictory and hesitant. All possible reactions and attitudes were displayed by different interviewees. From vigorously supporting violent acts to espousing complete pacifism, this was the question that divided participants the most. If a common pattern was to be found, it was that most people were not against the use of violence on principle, but were firmly against gratuitous forms. Many have stated that at some point, they found the use of violence to be unavoidable, for many different reasons. Two main categories could be detected: some focused on the use of violence by the state and the police, thus they thought of violence on the part of the movement as a necessary defensive mechanism (a form of

²¹³ Both the movement and the Left have been historically constituted around a masculine model, leading to an underestimation of gender issues, although women’s struggles for emancipation and women’s trade-unionism are not to be overlooked. Women have been very disproportionately affected by the crisis on many different levels, whilst prior to the crisis, they had to deal with massive inequalities in the labour market, and in their daily lives. Examining the ideological shell around the Greek society, it retains strong elements of a traditional one. The particular development of capitalism in Greece, under the shadow of Ottoman and Balkan legacies and religion, combined with the specific class structure of the society have deeply influenced gender construction and position. Religion, forms of nationalism and petty-bourgeois ideology containing the reinforcement and reproduction of the role of the family ideological apparatus have also largely contributed in the above. Neither the Left nor movements and their constitution have been immune to this sexist reality. For a more detailed approach on this issue, see (Gaitanou 2012).

²¹⁴ Keratea is a small village, where traditional values, behaviour and the customs of the local community are very dominant. Thus, this choice is even more important.

²¹⁵ However, I was able to interview only one immigrant participating in the movements (I25). He also stated that he felt no such discrimination.

counter-violence), whilst others defended it as an active means of changing society and/or the political system (without clearly defining the latter as a “revolution”). The vast majority stressed, however, that the use of violence should be in pursuit of a concrete purpose and strategy, as opposed to “blind forms”: *“violence could be a means for protesters to use, but it should have a concrete target”* (I13, but also I33, I37). In the same way, interviewees differentiated their attitude depending on where and when violence was exercised: as (I12) stated, *“violence against the police... I could understand this choice, it did not bother me, but against stores for example, it was meaningless”*. In general, there was a climate where the exercise of violence especially against the police and/or the banks was acceptable or comprehensible by many respondents²¹⁶. There was a widespread perception that the state exercises violence, either through repressive mechanisms (especially the police), or through its political and economic decisions: as (I12) said, *“economic and political measures themselves were arbitrary and unlawful”*. Many tended to search for the provocations and justifications behind the use of violence by some protesters: the most recurring patterns cited justified anger, impunity and injustice. However, a strange sense of guilt appeared when discussions turned to the subject of violence: many tried to attribute responsibility to the state and not to the protesters, feeling themselves as part of a unified whole, even if they had not personally exercised violence at any point. Further, the use of violence was identified as a mass practice: many noted that ordinary people could be seen throwing stones or reacting violently in certain circumstances. These findings on violence, a generally controversial subject, reveal a certain deepening of people's consciousness with respect to realizing the irreconcilability of their interests with the dominant socio-political system and the state.

On the other hand, many participants defended pacifism from a theoretical stand point. A few supported it on principle (defense of values, pro-life), whilst the majority

²¹⁶ (I9): *“People's anger is explicit, you cannot restrict it into molds. Trashing a bank is a justified form of reaction for me. I'm not 100% sure if this helps the movement or not. I find it justified. And the reaction against police violence, which was provocative – I also find it justified. So, if there is a revolt, I do not know... I cannot think of a revolt without acts of violence. Because we have already suffered too much violence, and you witness this violence in practice as well, from forces of repression, but in many other forms. For example, if you owe money and banks pressure you, you will manifest this violence somehow. You see, it is absolutely natural for me.”*

saw non-violence as a tactic, a necessary principle in increasing mass participation, and enhancing the legitimacy of movements in the eyes of society. (I15) noted for example that the use of violence ends by serving the government's purposes, since it makes the protesters appear culpable instead of the government. A few participants identified the use of violence with provocateurs, or persons incited by the government or the police. A few identified certain positive effects of the use of violence: mainly, functioning as a spectacle, they thought of it as a means for publicizing the movement through media attention (I37). It should be noted at this point that interviewees spoke of violence as acts meant to physically damage people or property; other practices, such as the occupation of buildings, which both state mechanisms and the media have striven to stigmatize as violent acts, were not thought of as violent (indicatively, I15 said on occupation as a practice: "*I consider it to be legal – I do not know why...*")²¹⁷.

d. The crisis of political representation and of legitimization of the state and its institutions.

One of the main sections of the interviews concerned the dominant popular perception of politics. It is worth noting that most participants had an initial hesitancy in conceiving of politics outside political parties. However, as the discussion unfolded, there was an almost universal emphasis on the fact that movement processes, and especially general assemblies and the various structures, were political in character. The question on the definition of politics usually ended up in a profound conversation. With regard to the political system, a very deep, almost indiscriminate, loss of respect was revealed. This was often linked to the frequently used slogan by protesters calling for punishment of politicians, visualized by gallows appearing as symbols during the squares' movement, or even a sense of degradation of politics vis-a-vis the economy

²¹⁷ We can in certain cases detect the opposite reaction: (I7), when speaking of the "I won't pay" movement and her choice not to pay tickets in public transport, seemed scared to admit her choice and was anxious to appear as law-abiding: she rushed to state that she did not pay, but even if she wanted, she wouldn't be able to, since protesters often blocked machines.

(see section e of chapter IV). As for political parties, the majority attributed the main blame for the current socio-political situation to the two parties in power (PASOK and ND), emphasizing that the whole “old political personnel” was thought to be implicated, even if parts of it had moved to new parties. This finding is important, given the Greek phenomenon of new parties being created, mainly by former cadres of the two parties in power, as way for the broader political system to ensure its survival and maintain overall stability²¹⁸.

There was however a wider tendency to distrust all parties, even if theoretically most participants recognized differences between them (I20: “*ok, I cannot speak of all the parties since they have not all been in power*”). Several claimed that achieving power inevitably leads to corruption: a characteristic statement concerning the Left was that even if it initially has good intentions, it will become one just like the others if it acquires power, because if transformed into an institution, it will be incorporated into the system (however, most were prepared to exercise the benefit of doubt, at least temporarily). This broader mistrust was expressed basically through a pattern among interviewees of criticizing political parties for: producing cleavages among people, having self-interested rather than altruistic motives, fiscal irresponsibility, functioning as a network for clientelism and corruption²¹⁹ and a lack of internal democracy. As a potentially positive way forward, some participants laid emphasis on the participation of new people in politics, and especially of young people (I19, I20). Most, however, seemed rather pessimistic about the possibility of actually solving these problems and

²¹⁸ This was the initial tendency, in front of a deep crisis of political representation. That tactics had poor results in integrating citizens into a new strategic plan under the hegemony of neoliberalism. The tactics that followed included the emergence of new parties, now linked to persons who had no prior relationship to politics. This has been more effective for the stabilization of the political system, since it has incorporated the broad feeling that politicians are the people most responsible for the current situation in Greece. It included the engagement in politics of technocrats but also of journalists and persons related to the mainstream celebrity system. Indicatively, the fourth party in the elections of January 25, 2015, with 6.05% of the vote, was a new one created by a former journalist from mainstream media (“Potami” by Stavros Theodorakis), with a pro-memorandum neoliberal political program. Having said that, this tactic has not been able to fully mollify the feelings of political deadlock experienced by the mass of the population, mainly because of the concrete political and historical tradition in Greece. On the contrary, the Left has been more successful in intervening into this crisis of political representation (as expressed mainly by the rise of SYRIZA). This explains why in Greece it was more difficult for phenomena to develop such as the Beppe Grillo party (Five Star Movement) in Italy.

²¹⁹ Many interviewees stressed on this point. (I4) kept repeating that in his decision on whether it is worth participating in an action, the most important criterion was whether someone, and especially a political party, would “benefit” from their participation in any way.

formulating a realistic and achievable way of exercising politics without the defects detailed above²²⁰. Almost all respondents stated their unwillingness to join a political party as members; suggesting, further to the mistrust towards political parties, the lack of a durable commitment to politics among them, not being interested in participating in permanent forms of political activism. There are, thus, two rather different groups with little overlap: one with more organic ties with the organizational web of parties, and one with no such a relationship or perspective²²¹.

However, interviewees did not seem to be led to complete disillusionment with democracy as such. The majority of participants claimed that the problem is not inherent in parliamentary democracy as a regime, but in the way it functions in Greece or in its political representatives (parties, politicians etc.). This did not simply refer to scandals or corruption: practically all forty interviewees have claimed explicitly or implicitly that the actual functioning of the political system does not correspond to parliamentary democracy (the majority comparing it to dictatorships). (I19) claimed characteristically that *“ok, in theory we have democracy. What we are experiencing, is it really democracy?? What we are experiencing is a junta! They pass along laws without us knowing. They claim something and they apply something else!”* Almost all participants explicitly claimed to support democracy as a system, and many linked negatively the rejection of democracy as such with GD and fascism, or their thought went reflexively straight there when the relevant question was posed. This persistence in parliamentary democracy also counters certain anarchist views of the movement, which stressed “direct democracy” as a “paradigm”, that would, generalized as such, provide the solution to the question of a new form of politics. The inadequacy of such an argument is even more evident, when thinking of the real problems that were reproduced in the “direct democratic structures”, and people's identification of them as the proof that such models cannot be viable in large scale and in the long-run.

²²⁰ This is reminiscent of a classic populist pattern of “the people against the politicians”, or “the political regime”. It is actually quite close to the “people against the casta” of the Indignados, or even “the people against the leader/regime” of the Arab spring.

²²¹ As (I31) interestingly put it, *“[The Left] could be completely right, I am not questioning that... But if you are... There is an 'in' and an 'out' in any case. And if you are 'out', you do not have a link, the interconnection is missing.”*

As far as the Left in particular is concerned, there was a considerable level of skepticism and mistrust. This referred both to its attitude in parliament and its intervention in movements. Of course, as mentioned above, many made the distinction between the Left and systemic parties that have actually governed. Not having colluded with power was thought to exempt the Left from the general denigration (I14). This point is important: it proves that, for the Left to be part of the solution, and not of the problem, it has to claim governmental power not as other parties, but with a different strategic orientation – if not, it will soon be thought merely to complement the frame of devaluation and mistrust²²². As for the main critiques made of the Left, these included its distance from the people (many referred to its “stereotyped language”) leading to its inability to actually express their interests, or represent them. Many interviewees claimed that the Left, when participating in the movements, is motivated by self-interest, aiming at achieving its own objectives rather than those of the people. Some opinions went further to say that the Left does not listen to, or care for, what the people have to say, that it is rigid, inflexible and suppresses individual opinions. In the squares' movement, a large debate developed about whether the Left should participate in the movement with its own party signs, based on the argument that people should participate without any political mediation. Most interviewees were aware of this debate, and actually agreed that the Left should not have participated as such (unlike trade-unions). This type of presence of the Left would, for them, have created divisions among the people and, as characteristically stated, would have “*reproduced classical political stereotypes*” (I27). The perceived gradual degeneration of the Syntagma Square general assemblies, as mentioned above, was attributed by some to the Left: “*they only sought to impose their views*”, “*they did not listen to us ordinary people*”, “*they tried to impose their own way of functioning, usually in an underground way*” etc.

²²² This is relevant to the years that followed: in 2015, SYRIZA gained governmental power. Its rapid and violent adjustment to memorandum politics was to be to the detriment of the Left as a whole, since it was perceived from the people as a proof that “they are all the same”, that no potential for an actually different politics is left and that a kind of TINA is again enshrined. The grounds for such a perception are clearly detected in the interviews conducted, however, at the time of the interviews, the Left was thought capable of providing, at least in theory, a genuine alternative. I would estimate that the collapse of these expectations will have important consequences for the political scene as a whole, let alone for the specific role and position of the Left.

A contradiction appears here in feelings about the role of the Left. The majority claimed that movements faced certain problems and limitations, and that the presence of an organized and experienced political force could have been a catalyst for consolidating their organization, political formulation, strategy and planning, persistence and determination²²³ (thus, the KKE which had chosen not to participate in many such movements, was presented by most interviewees as completely discredited in their consciousness, eg. I10, I11, I16). On the other hand, many respondents denounced the existing leftist groups that participated, along the lines of the criticism elaborated above. Therefore, we observe a general recognition and legitimation of the potential role of the Left at a theoretical level, in parallel to the disappointment caused by the failure of existing leftist organizations and parties to fulfill such a role. This general mistrust, and lack of positive engagement with the Left, was also expressed by many when discussing their personal attitude in the elections²²⁴. Overall, many placed emphasis on the need for a unity among the Left, as a spontaneous reflection, being relatively indifferent to any deeper elaboration on its terms (the program, the strategic goal, tactics, coalitions etc.). These findings are directly tied to the debate on the question and the role of “leadership” in movements. Leadership is acknowledged by interviewees as an important factor missing from the movements (and resulting in their evanescence), while at the same time the dominant formulation with respect to the motor of their participation, has been that these were “leaderless movements”, in the sense of not being directly linked to political actors. This whole point will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Regarding the state and its institutions, an overwhelming sense of delegitimation prevailed, while participants identified a shift in their opinions after participating in the

²²³ There are some who appeared more positive towards the actual contribution of the Left. For example (I30) said: *“The Left had... had as a target of this whole thing to end up in... in a mobilization, in a position in the street, concrete. It tried to make this whole thing a movement in the streets, based on a concrete plan, which would end up in a designed presence. This was positive.”*

²²⁴ This mistrust refers mainly to low expectations of a potential election victory by the Left: actually, many participants, although the interviews did not at all focus on electoral representation, stated at some point that they probably *would* vote for the Left, and especially SYRIZA, but with low expectations regarding its actual radicalism and potential.

movements towards a greater degree of disillusionment and contempt²²⁵. The police were almost totally discredited, seen as an instrument of repression, rather than as a mechanism for protecting citizens. The majority of respondents claimed this was clear to them prior to their participation, but their experience provided graphic confirmation of the degree of brutality and arbitrariness exercised by the forces of law and order. Literally everyone laid emphasis on the arbitrary and unprovoked nature of police violence. For (I3), *"it was astonishing to realize how easy it was to be injured or harmed without having done absolutely anything wrong"*. A significant minority also claimed that their outrage had been clearly exacerbated by observing police behaviour in the streets, *"the unprovoked and irrational character of their action"*. Almost every participant had a story of police arbitrariness to tell from personal experience²²⁶, whilst, as (I31) aptly noted, participating in or witnessing a specific incident could function as a powerful experience; for someone to feel real fear and determine her participatory behaviour. However, the vast majority claimed that although they considered that the police presence did discourage "others"/"the majority of the society" from participating in mobilizations, it did not discourage them personally. Thus, they recognized "the efficacy of repression and of terrorization", but for *others*²²⁷. Many said that police behaviour made them feel more determined in their participation, rather than discouraging them from participating (I14, I17). Although police behaviour was presented as predictable, almost everyone claimed to have felt fear, whilst a range of relevant emotions revealed the effects of police repression on people's psychology: *"horrifying"* (I3), *"seemed so powerful that made me feel helpless"* (I4) etc. In a relevant question about the state, participants had had difficulty understanding what the

²²⁵ (I17) claimed characteristically: *"I've realized that the state has a different role than the one I imagined, until now. That the state has an additional aspect, the exercise of violence. As a service for... for someone, let's say for the government... Well, the state has shown me its hard facade"*.

²²⁶ (I31) noted this as such: *"Most people have an incident of police violence to narrate"*.

²²⁷ Interpreting such a reaction, I would emphasize two points: on the one hand, it seemed easier for respondents to attribute feelings or behaviours to others than directly to themselves, probably out of hesitation or even a sense of shame, since such feelings are thought to be "negative" or "defensive". On the other hand, attribution to others implies a cognitive elaboration: in other words, it expresses what participants *think* that such an intervention by the police should logically provoke to people. A distinction between what respondents think that "others should feel" and what they themselves feel proves the gap between a logical reaction in a sterile environment and the actual reaction in the context of the movement: it proves in other words the effect of collective political participation into people feeling stronger and more self-confident.

question referred to, and often answered as if it referred to the police. This finding shows belief in a deep interconnection between the state and police, and the identification of the state with repression in character and behaviour.

As for trade-unionism, both GSEE and ADEDY fell low in people's consideration, together with trade-unionism in general, though to an evidently lesser extent. Their identification as "bureaucratized" or "corrupt" was a recurrent pattern, whilst the most important element denounced by almost all was their dependence on political parties (I5: "*every single cadre of them becomes a deputy afterwards*"). The majority claimed explicitly not to feel that these organizations represent workers' interests, and that instead they constitute "*state or employees mechanisms*" (I16). As for the common practice of these confederations to call sporadic one-day strikes, the vast majority of interviewees thought of it as woefully insufficient and delegitimizing, as was examined in chapter IV. As (I4) and (I13) both claimed, this practice was "*nothing more than a gunshot in the air*"²²⁸. On the other hand, most participants distinguished between confederations and grassroots unionism (irrespective of their actual knowledge, or ignorance, as self-attested, of the actions of the grassroots unionism; still, those with no direct contact with grassroots trade-unions were generally more reluctant to express a firm opinion, but had a tentatively positive attitude). Grassroots unionism was believed to actually pursue to represent workers' true interests, but having less opportunity to do so, being weaker. In general, the majority's attitude towards trade-unionism was more favourable than expected: the necessity of union representation was widely recognized, and trade-unionism itself was thought to be necessary and positive in principle. These findings confirm to a large extent the theoretical formulations posed in chapter III, on the deficiencies and the overall delegitimation of the organized trade-union movement, along with the recognition of the contribution (and the structural and conjunctural weaknesses) of the new, emergent forms of the labour movement.

²²⁸ (I27): "*For as long as the practice is to take a walk, to make a 24-hour strike with no other organization, with no other leverage, with no other negotiation, and ok, we've shaken our banners, we've had five chemical weapons thrown at us, and ok, then it is meaningless, this goes nowhere.*"

There was also a deep disillusionment with the media, seen as directly tied to political power and functioning as a propaganda mechanism. The main pattern emerging was that the media follow the line of economic and political interests. Many claimed that this became clear to them immediately after their participation, when, returning home from a protest, they witnessed the media presenting it in a light completely at odds with their personal experience. Almost all reacted as if the intrinsic character of the mainstream media and their role were viewed with considerable suspicion and were deeply delegitimized. In fact, the media was regarded with less respect than any other institution in participants' minds, and, as they themselves stated, this has been evident even prior to their participation in movements. Regarding the alternative media, the attitude of the interviewees was generally positive. They were presented to help both providing comprehensive and universal information and disseminating knowledge, while simultaneously strengthening organization inside movements. There was a certain hesitancy by some participants about whether these means are also tied to particular interests (I4), their anonymity blurring purposes and credibility) (I11), their function as a safety valve, harmlessly releasing pressure that might otherwise lead to action (I11), their weakness in contributing to actual organization (I13). Thus, they were not unconditionally and universally esteemed and approved of, confirming our estimation of their role as tools of the movements, but in contrast to an ostensible "digitalization" of movements (see also section c of chapter IV). However, everyone admitted their generally positive contribution to movements.

Finally, when asked about the EU, most people expressed disillusionment with its policies and role. A significant share of the responsibility for the situation in Greece was attributed to the EU. However, in the question "*to whom do you attribute responsibility for the current situation?*", the vast majority spoke clearly and with little confusion of the responsibility of both internal and external centres of power: very few referred to the country's "occupation" or of the Greek politicians as simply "pawns" of the European ones. Actually, many perceived the question as a tendency to discount the responsibility of Greek politicians, and react negatively. The majority claimed that the

EU functions in the interests of north-Western countries (most of them referred to Germany and secondarily to France). Many claimed to be skeptical but not completely hostile to the idea of leaving the EU: some claimed the existence of a theoretical potential for European countries to be linked together for the benefit of their people, but very few considered this practically feasible in the current situation. Few fully supported exiting the EU and some seem very puzzled about the issue, saying that possibly, if Greece was to exit the EU, the first period would be difficult but eventually “*we would get round things*” (I15, I16). Others emphasized the structural defects of the EU, but were very hesitant about concluding that this should lead Greece to exit the EU²²⁹. The general tone of all the responses confirmed the lack of any active and positive engagement with the EU. These findings lead us to the conclusion that there is a relative acknowledgement of the problematic and potentially strategic defects of the EU. However, the lack of a fully elaborated, coherent alternative path and of a political organizational form reliably representing such an alternative, combined with a pervasive campaign of fear in Greece about the supposed consequences of a potential exit, lead to people being very reluctant to formulate such a demand. This finding is important since in the years that followed the potential of exiting the EU was and still is a growing concern in the public discourse and in society, with the potential of more people leaning towards such an option.

Therefore, to conclude and summarize at this point: this research, conducted through interviews with people who participated in the mobilizations of 2010-2011 but had no prior political commitment or concrete participation, confirmed the initial assumption of a very deep crisis of political representation and of legitimation of the state and its institutions. Its persistence and generalization is deeply destabilizing for the functioning of the political system. The research also confirmed the centrality and significance of the debate about leadership of movements, combined with the weaknesses of the Left in people's perception and experience. Finally, it has

²²⁹ (I19) characteristically described numerous structural problems of the EU and her perception of its responsibility for the current situation in Greece, but when I asked her if this implies that she thought that Greece should exit the EU, she responded in panic: “*Exit? No! No no no no! I do not know what should happen, but something else, something else, yes!*”

highlighted the deficiencies of the traditional trade-union movement. These points will be further examined in the next chapter.

e. The role of participation and self-evaluation in consciousness transformation.

“A 'conscience of rupture' expresses a rupture, first of all, with the present eternity of current time, when nothing essential changes... and when we are assured that tomorrow will be made of the same ingredients that today is” (Kouvelakis 2007: 169-70)

The main research question of the present thesis refers to the transformation of consciousness in respect to political participation. I chose to posit this question directly to participants in interviews to stimulate them to reflect on this potential transformation. The findings are very interesting, since participants were, if anything, over-eager to enter into this process. In response to questions related to consciousness transformation²³⁰, most participants detected, on reflection, a significant shift in their own opinions and feelings, stating that, prior to their participation, they were either indifferent or had a rather out of focus image of what participation might entail. The biggest shifts in opinions concern the political system, the role of the state and their own social position, and to a lesser extent, the police (whose role they thought of as known, but whose predisposition towards brutality became reinforced) and even less the media (which appeared to have lost any legitimacy even before participation in movements). As for political parties, there was a firm statement by many that participation reinforced their opinion that all parties were essentially similar.

²³⁰ Such questions went as following: *“Has the way you perceive the social reality / the political system / your social position / the role of the state / the media / the police changed after your participation in the protests, and if so, how?”*

A crucial point of this part of the interviews is the evaluation of the importance of participation, its effects on self-transformation and on consciousness formation. To begin with, a deeper than expected trust in social mobilization, an optimism about its potential, and a positive attitude towards its meaning and effectiveness came to the surface²³¹. Many participants stressed the increase of consciousness of society as a whole. As (I13) emphasized: *“You become more... more properly thinking. You think of things more comprehensively. You do not think of them like before: ‘OK, the only thing that matters is for me to be well, to have my little job, to mind only so as to keep it’; you think of things in a more global way, this is very positive”*. The question on how participants evaluated the importance of participation was divided into two thematic sections: the practical effects and the effects on consciousness. In general, participants tended to identify consequences at the level of consciousness rather than in the practical/material level (ie. in their lives). In terms of practical consequences, many interviewees concluded that the concrete impact of participation was limited or even non-existent. The greater the extent of participation, the more emphatic this assessment was. The case of a worker in a company that had not paid workers for months, leading to them carrying out a long-lasting strike, was indicative: to the question on whether participation in collective actions has any results, she responded *“For sure, ok, than doing nothing.. It goes without saying, we must... we must always try, react, participate wherever we can, show that, in any case, we do not accept all those things that they impose on us without a fight. Against doing nothing, for sure, for sure. But all struggles should be united, for me. Because there is no result. None. They just happen only to happen, do you understand? We’ve reached this point.”* A degree of vagueness characterized many respondents on this point. Some stated that there are specific positive effects – for example, learning how to take a decision, helping people in need or making new acquaintances and friendships. Others, however, highlighted negative effects as well: a waste of time and good mood (I28), or witnessing problems reproduced in collective processes, such as lust for power or conservatism (I31).

²³¹ This lower expectation is due, among other things, to the specific conjuncture when the interviews were conducted.

As for the effects on consciousness at the personal level, the responses were quite different from those mentioned above. Participants were enthusiastic in identifying significant effects. Many of them said that afterwards they realized that they themselves, even as single individuals, *“do have power and can offer something”*. Most stressed the value of coming into contact with collective values, challenging hierarchies in life, suppressing selfish motives and realizing the importance of civic engagement in new terms. As an older participant movingly noted: *“I have created a better relationship with my child since in the movements I saw the ‘we’”* (I14). Participation was thought to be an answer to a prevailing broader individualistic tendency: *“You do not stay closed with yourself, which is a problem of our epoch”* (I28); *“I’ve learned and understood the problems of other people”* (I11). In general, a recurring pattern was that of an existing mentality in Greek people that was considered selfish and individualistic; many spoke of the “nature/culture of the Greeks”, and stressed the need for education in order to change it. However, many stated that after acquiring experience of this movement they have appreciated more “the society” and “the people”, to an extent they would never have anticipated beforehand. Information and the sharing of ideas are also thought to be important gains resulting from political participation: *“You do not live in your own ivory tower, you are in touch with reality”* (I4); *“It enriches yourself as a human being”* (I2). Some emphasized a feeling of fulfilling a debt, by not being simply passive: *“I feel fine with myself above all”* (I9). Certain negative aspects were detected as well, mainly the onset of disappointment, because of inefficiency (I15) or of coming up against other people’s selfishness (I33).

As for the possibility of subsequently participating again in collective actions, almost all interviewees have stated a greater inclination to participate on another occasion. There was a recurrent pattern in statements, saying that even if participation was futile in terms of practical effects, participants did not regret their choice and would do it again. They did however seem selective about the sort of actions that would trigger this participation. For instance, although their importance was widely recognized, the overwhelming majority has not participated in solidarity structures that

have developed in Greece since the movements, as the ones examined above (in section d of chapter IV, mentioned in note 182 in particular). Obviously, more central political actions can engage people more widely, even those who have a prior experience of participation such as our interviewees, whereas solidarity structures and particular actions refer mainly to those who have developed a more organic relationship with politics and political organizations. Massiveness of movements was posited as a necessary condition for effectiveness and a motivation for participation (as an indicator of potential success and a sign that what is happening is exceptional). Further, some stated that after their first participation in the period 2010-2011, they would participate again, but more selectively and with greater wariness (I29, I33). In (I26)'s words, *"Today I would participate in a movement but with less emphasis on spontaneity and more on organization and action"*. As a conclusion, participants seemed to have a need to acknowledge the importance of their participation. However, inability to identify concrete gains and effects from this participation made them more hesitant in committing to more intensive future participation. This is a key point, since it reveals an important limit and limitation of the transformations on the level of consciousness. Participation does not seem to have had significant durable impacts on the political practices and the daily life of the participants. Despite the excitement demonstrated during the interviews, this participation is conceptualized as temporary, and not the starting point of a durable commitment. This is also proven by the fact that few of the interviewees were interested in participating in any durable form of political activism (parties, solidarity networks, campaigns). This finding is strengthened taking in mind the sample of the research: being people who have actively agreed to participate in the research, they are probably those who have actually undergone an even more important consciousness transformation through participation (hence their willingness to share their views on the movements). Thus, we could be led to the conclusion that, for the great mass of participants, once the movements were over, everything "went back to normal" to an important degree, with respect to their political engagement and active participation.

Having said that, the theoretical point on consciousness transformation through political participation and people's own *praxis* and autonomous politics exercise, is strongly confirmed. Indeed, political participation in movements induces an even more acute transformation in people's perception of the state, politics, the media and other institutional mechanisms and institutions like the EU. There is, further, a certain radicalization and sharpening of perspectives linked to participation, under the limits and limitations also presented. These tendencies are evident with respect to both the effects of political participation and certain elements and findings presented in the whole chapter (for example, on popular belief in forms of protest, the use of violence by protesters, the perception of their interests as competing with those of other social groups etc.).

f. New forms of exercising politics: Towards an inevitable institutionalization or another practice of politics?

"I think that this is the core of politics, its DNA, it's where it starts from. If politics in Greece started that way, I would participate" (15)²³²

As examined in chapter I, classic social movement theories often present a trajectory of movements in which their institutionalization and integration into the dominant political system is inevitable. The NSMT, on the one hand, tends to study movements in their partiality, as heterogeneous and fragmented phenomena, finally underestimating their radicalism and effectiveness in questioning the bourgeois hegemony as a whole. The PPT tradition, on the other hand, is inclined to a descriptive and empirical approach, also fragmentary in the sense of not being dialectical, which again results in a certain determinism regarding movements' emergence, outcomes

²³² Response to the question "Do you consider what happened in the squares movement, with the assemblies and the thematic groups, as a way to exercise politics?"

and overall evolution. This course of institutionalization is often firmly linked to the existence of social movement organizations. A “natural course” is supposed to exist for a movement, which entails either its institutionalization and integration into the political system, or its radicalization and thus its repression and evanescence. For others (for example, Tarrow 1989; Fillieule et Della Porta 2006: 85-112), the perception of this “determinism of institutionalization” as the only option for social movements is due to the continuous democratization of contemporary representative democracies, transforming them into “societies of movements”, able to integrate them into their normal functioning (Serdedakis criticizing this in 2007: 389). This perspective idealizes a process of democratization in modern societies, which, especially concerning recent history, should be heavily contested, as examined in chapters II and III²³³. Regarding the current crisis in particular, one of the main flaws shared by social movement theories from different traditions is the collapse of one of their fundamental preconditions: the ostensible democratization and pacification of modern societies, due to a supposed general rise in living standards and generalized prosperity. Aside from the various critiques that were raised in chapter I, this misconception has led to an overall weakness in adjusting and responding to the challenges currently prevailing in studying social movements in countries affected by the global crisis.

It should be underlined at this point that, when referring to “institutionalization”, we have to make a distinction: On the one hand, there is the – correct - assessment that any movement is situated in the terrain of the state, perceived in the broad sense as the unity of “civil” and “political society” in Gramscian terms (Thomas 2009b: 30). On the other hand, institutionalization may refer to a process that inevitably leads to the integration of movements into (capitalist) institutions, hence their commitment or even subordination, in the last instance, to the dominant political strategy. In other words, following such an analysis, movements are somehow predestined to become part of

²³³ In these studies, too often contemporary democracies are considered more democratic than they truly are. For example, Fillieule et Della Porta approach contemporary police as evolving into a “police of citizens” (2006: 20). The general tendency that is promoted in this work is that of a gradual but constant democratization, normalization and pacification of social conflicts (for example, Fillieule et Della Porta 2006: 21-2, 87-8, 97, 110, 127).

the status quo, and this is considered as inherent in their emergence and make-up. On the contrary, I argue that what differentiates social movements is that, despite this reference to the state, they also have an additional component, which cannot be simply reduced to institutional arrangements and procedures and which, simultaneously, reveals the limits of this very “institutionalization”.

The major theoretical themes of this approach presupposing inevitable institutionalization will be further examined in the next chapter. At this point, I will examine the interviewees' own perception of the possibility of constituting new forms of exercising politics through movement processes. Our primary interest is to examine the possibility that participants significantly change their whole perception of politics, or if, on the contrary, this “determinism of institutionalization” seems to be confirmed in their minds. It is important, in this respect, that participants perceived the various forms developed in the context of the movements (structures, assemblies, focus and thematic groups) as having a political character, attributing to them both a practical usefulness and a function in terms of a political paradigm. A positive attitude regarding general assemblies prevailed, especially concerning their democratic nature and functioning and the ability of everyone to participate²³⁴, despite the strong reservations among them about their effectiveness in praxis. Many stated that assemblies have functioned as “a space for expression”, “a forum for everyone to state their problem”, or as “a psychological uplift”, but with few opportunities to actually organize and concretely bring about political change. The thematic and working groups were thought to be generally more effective in material terms. However, there seemed to be a reluctance to think about generalizing this model as a paradigm for exercising politics: the majority claimed not being able to understand how this could function on a larger scale. This finding is important, as I have already noted above, against an “anarchist” interpretation, according to which direct democracy could be generalized as a paradigm for the function of the whole society.

²³⁴ These points have been more analytically presented in section e of chapter IV. Here, I shall focus on the relationship of these structures with a different way of perceiving politics.

Thus, in terms of their political function, there was a difficulty among participants in forming, through this personal experience, a specific model of an alternative political constitution, although acknowledging this as a necessity. Technical and practical reasons were mainly raised with respect to this difficulty in recognizing movements as potentially something more than a reaction (thus as having a productive potential in the long-term, functioning as structures of counter-power). It is however interesting that, in their answers to the relevant question, many interviewees did try to imagine such alternative solutions or models. A few stated that this was an issue that had already preoccupied them after their participation in these movements. Some even suggested certain ideas or models: from making political participation on a regular basis obligatory, to focusing more on local organization, small communities and decentralization. Nevertheless, the vast majority did not seem persuaded that such solutions could evolve into a viable model for general implementation. The most difficult thing to think about seemed any possible interconnection between the central political power and such ventures: interviewees tended to think of the potential of either one or the other dominating, but not of a model that could incorporate both. This line of thinking indicates that at some point the two are perceived as antagonistic (with different objectives, interests to satisfy, modes of functioning etc.). This is a significant point which reflects one of the most serious deficiencies of the Left, to be studied below: the overall weakness in perceiving a dialectical relationship between the social and the political levels, in the sense of providing a model which would potentially incorporate both structures of counter-hegemony or social control from below, and an alternative political proposition in the central political scene, including (but not exhausted at) the parliamentary level.

The way the structures emerging after the movements of 2010-2011 were viewed by interviewees is indicative. As already discussed, a number of different social structures have arisen at both local and sectoral levels. Social centres, working clubs, networks of solidarity, social clinics and pharmacies, popular assemblies at a local level and occupations of public buildings to be used as centres of self-organization comprise

some of these forms. Their primary target has been to provide a network of solidarity and fulfill certain basic needs, while simultaneously forming different exemplars of social and political organization. Most participants were aware of such structures, and their contributions were generally highly regarded, both at the material and political levels. However, very few had in any way participated in them. These forms have mainly functioned as an avenue of organization and intervention for the Left and activists affiliated to it (even in the broader sense) rather than a means of actual engagement with society.

At this point, it should be stressed that Greece lacks a coherent tradition of counter-power structures; movements have usually had a reactive character, basically constituted at the central-political level, without building or leaving any permanent legacy of structures of counter-power and counter-hegemony. As previously discussed, after the civil war, the radical Left, in all its forms, followed a line of class defensiveness. It neither chose or was able to employ a strategy of alternative counter-power (in material and not simply ideological terms), precisely because it exercised politics in such a way that the issue of power was never actually posed in an antagonistic manner. This has inevitably had an impact on how workers and citizens have conceived of their own existence and potential for action. Thus, examples of practices of alternative organization laying claim to areas of power are absent from the collective consciousness.

In the Metapolitefsi, the structures of the movement of factory unionism have been the only real example of such projects. The emergence and rise of PASOK to power contained this process, since an important sector of society and the social movement conceived of its struggle in terms of exerting pressure on the state rather than constituting a concrete alternative in competition with it. Labour protesters claimed resources from central power and resisted restructuring rather than creating new forms of organization, which would potentially be more appropriate and effective in the specific circumstances. The state has never been seriously challenged as the organizer of production and of daily life. Demands and aspirations were addressed to

the state as the omniscient provider, rather than as efforts to formulate alternative solutions to problems. The Left seemed to have neither the will nor the ability to challenge such a reality. A system of consensus and social alliances evolved which became pivotal in forming both material and ideological conditions and correlations, producing a situation where the state and the political power as such were never questioned. Thus, the Left was able to present itself as a force of resistance, and even to be acclaimed as a champion of social interests in certain periods, but never seen as constituting a really hegemonic alternative force in a durable perspective. This has also relied on material terms and limits: in a period of economic growth, with the state actually forming stable social alliances through certain benefits, as we have already examined in chapter II, certain social strata have been more materially linked to the state.

Furthermore, in the current period, the dominant and pervasive sense of weakness of the Left combined with the lack of an alternative positive engagement and of a specific and convincing strategy and vision, both in terms of social organization and of political function, have deterred the mass of society from vigorously engaging in possible alternative ways of perceiving politics with any aspirations of success. The idea that the acquisition of power is inherently corrupting, repeated in many interviews, is another way of expressing mistrust towards the Left, but also of highlighting its impotence in persuading people of the viability of a different political and strategic plan. The movements of the period examined here have contributed in highlighting this lack of an alternative vision of politics, without providing solutions as to how the problem could be surmounted. This points to the role of the political subject, and of its relative autonomy, to be further examined in the next chapter.

Regarding the structures that emerged out of the movements, interviewees situated their weaknesses in constituting potential solutions under two headings: the inability to imagine how they could be viable and sustainable in the long run, and the failure in adequately responding to all the emergent needs regarding organization. The tendency of many people to project a defense of the need for autonomy as a reflexive

reaction against the Left, as they experienced it (eg. I32), further compromised any such potential. Of course, this emphasis on autonomy simultaneously expresses an actual need: as (I5) underlined, “*the thought that the very community decides for itself is very positive*”. Neither the “lower square” activist core was able to provide this kind of “vanguard”, mainly due to its lack of representativeness (both qualitatively and quantitatively), its lack of organization and its inability to function in the long-term and to provide a common strategic orientation. These weaknesses were expressed in the absence of a commonly elaborated political programme and in the inability to form a common will and unify the social subject involved in this process. In other words, as already examined in chapter IV, this activist core could not “provide actual leadership” - or even attempt to do so. What it has been able to do, successfully to some degree, was to contribute in the short-term, in terms of direct organization, diffusion of protest and information and of coordination between different mobilizations and social groups.

Therefore, the gap between the need for a different way of perceiving politics, and the actual practical steps towards its formulation, becomes a given, and is probably even exacerbated by the participation in movements. There remains, even if not specifically and organizationally formulated, a strongly felt demand for a deepening of democratic processes and greater involvement of people in politics. After having examined people's views on these points, I will proceed to the last chapter of my thesis where I will theoretically systematize these results in respect to the formation and transformation of consciousness and the perception of the political, based on political participation.

CHAPTER VI: MAKING HISTORY. ON THE FORMATION OF SUBJECTIVITY AND CONSCIOUSNESS

The previous chapters have examined the socio-economic and political reality in Greece in times of crisis, and the parallel and significant rise of the social movement in all its aspects. I have also presented the results of my field work and focused on the transformation in the consciousness of the movement participants. The starting point has been the assumption that if the objective circumstances, the socio-political and economic reality and the hardening of the state management of the crisis have decisively influenced the rise of the social movement, the subjective factor and class struggle have significantly changed its constitutive make-up. The development of social protests not only transforms the consciousness of those participating, but also of the society as a whole, thus becoming a factor in its own development. Indeed, since a movement is a process, it must be seen “in terms of *action*”, including how actors produce the “we” of their action (Melucci 1989: 19-20), without underestimating the distance between an action and its meaning.

The main focus of this research is on people's consciousness of their participation and engagement, and the transformative effects of action upon them. The theoretical point that arises is linked to the constitutive terms of subjectivity and class consciousness within specified conditions. The formation of subjectivity, its basic features and potentialities, its position and role in the context of the broader social protests that develop, and broader issues on the structure/agency problem are interesting in this respect; so is the formation and transformation of (class) consciousness, and its relationship to the spontaneous movements of people, social groups and classes. The role of organizational forms and the political subject are significant in this process. My perspective, previously outlined from chapter I onwards, is based on a philosophy of praxis approach, posed in the context of a broader Marxist tradition. This approach is perceived as the theoretical affirmation “that every 'truth'

believed eternal and absolute has had practical origins and has represented a 'provisional' value" (Gramsci 1971: 406), and in the sense that *praxis* itself transforms reality.

In this last chapter of the thesis, these theoretical points will be examined in relation to the findings of my field research. Thus, in section a, I will posit certain theoretical points on the formation of subjectivity and consciousness. Taking into account the results from my research with respect to the role of trade-unionism, people's perception on class identity and the specific features of the movements, I will elaborate on the role of the various social identities, primarily that of class identity. In section b, I will deal with the organizational issue in relation to spontaneity, focusing on the role of the political subject and discussing the findings of my field research as presented in the previous chapter. Finally, in the last section of the chapter, I will discuss the ultimate problem of defining and conceiving the political, based on the experience emerging from the social movements in Greece during the first period of the crisis.

a. Theoretical thoughts on subjectivity and class consciousness.

"It might seem that there can exist an extra-historical and extra-human objectivity. But who is the judge of such objectivity? Who is able to put himself in this kind of 'standpoint of the cosmos in itself' and what could such a standpoint mean?... Objective always means 'humanly objective' which can be held to correspond exactly to 'historically subjective': in other words, objective would mean 'universal subjective'. Man knows objectively in so far as knowledge is real for the whole human race

historically unified in a single unitary cultural system.”
(Gramsci 1971: 445).

In this section, I will examine the main theoretical points on the formation of subjectivity and class consciousness as they emerged from my fieldwork and studying the relevant bibliography. This discussion will help us clarify the relation between the objective and the subjective factor, and its role in the emergence of protest movements. According to a well-known statement, Marx, after defining the material, objective conditions shaping social reality, claimed that “it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (Marx 1904: 11-12). This argumentation has been read in various ways, implying different understandings of the relationship between the objective conditions and consciousness. A dominant interpretation has been the implication that consciousness is a non-mediated and linear reflection of objective circumstances, in which people are forcibly subsumed. The problem with this definition is the conceptualization of consciousness as a direct product or derivative of the social being. Thus, other mediations are neglected, and consciousness is deprived of its role as an active determination which can transform social being itself.

Nevertheless, there are numerous references supporting the thesis that Marx himself thought of the role of consciousness as a catalyst²³⁵. Significant among these are the well-known *Theses on Feuerbach*, in which Marx breaks with existing materialism in emphasizing the perception of reality “as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively” and “not in the form of the *object* or of *contemplation*” (Marx and Engels 2010b: 3). The decisive element of *praxis* is established as a necessary condition for perceiving reality, since it defines the only way to conceive and rationally understand “the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or

²³⁵ Engels explained this over-emphasis on the economic factor to the detriment of the subjective one, in two ways: firstly, due to the need to emphasize the so far neglected role of the economic factor (thus a bend of the stick), and secondly, due to the political necessity of highlighting the potential of a different social organization (Marx and Engels 1976: 441).

self-changing” (Marx and Engels 2010b: 4). This position posits a dialectical relationship between the subject and the object.

Such a debate alludes to the notion of historical materialism as a concept emphasizing the materialist conception of history, as a theory of history²³⁶. If “men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please... but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past”²³⁷ (Marx 2010a: 103), what is the role of the movements in this process? To answer this question requires contravening a more “orthodox”, objectivist description of history as the process of the development of productive forces in which the subjective factor has no real space to act. It also requires conflicting with a subjectivist approach in which human action is deified irrespective of the objective conditions. Fredric Jameson has read these formulations, as “two fundamental languages, which could alternate with one another, be substituted for one another or translated into each other”²³⁸ (Jameson 2011: 142). According to the author, accepting such a dualism would lead to the conclusion that either the system is all-powerful (thus producing fatalism), or that subjects may simply surpass any limit posed by the system (thus producing a dangerous voluntarism) (Jameson 2011: 144-45).

Gramsci (1971: 345) suggests a historicist view of the problem, putting the rational will (equaling, in the last instance, practical or political activity, and corresponding to objective historical necessities) at the base of philosophy²³⁹. This, for the author, is “universal history itself in the moment of its progressive actualization”. Thus, in contrast to a perception of history moving in successive stages, the actual question is: How can we find a way of approaching the relationship between the objective and the subjective

²³⁶ “These three elements – the existence of a weak tendency for the productive forces to develop, the consequent likelihood of organic crises and the primacy of structural capacities and class interests in explaining social action – make of classical historical materialism a theory of history, a theory, that is, which claims to account for the dynamic processes through which social systems are transformed. It is also one in which human agency plays a pivotal role - in the terrible, bloody struggles which unfold in a period of organic crisis.” (Callinicos 2004: 106).

²³⁷ A formulation which Jean Paul Sartre has claimed consists of the fundamental thesis of historical materialism.

²³⁸ The dichotomy between the two is succinctly conceptualized in (Eagleton 2003).

²³⁹ “Freedom of the will therefore means nothing but the capacity to make decisions with knowledge of the subject.” (Engels 1959: 157). According to Mpitsakis, freedom is “the knowledge of necessity and at the same time the active intervention for its acceptance or even its denial” (2013: 118). Besides, in Gramsci, will “can be made more powerful in that, by obeying, by disciplining itself to necessity, it finally dominates necessity itself, identifying it with its own ends” (Gramsci 2012: 154).

factor while distancing ourselves from voluntarism, fatalism or evolutionism²⁴⁰? This is the question that this last chapter attempts to answer. The answer has to be perceived in relation to social protest and class struggle, since this question is not posited in the same way in all periods: its meaning is different when, on the one hand, events seem to repeat themselves; reality is seen as virtually unchanged; the potential for radical change seems pure madness; and, on the other hand, in history's sharp turns; when the creativity and inventiveness of classes bursts out (Gaitanou and Gousis 2015: 127). This is why Eagleton argued that "the kind of Marxism for which human agency was an agreeable bonus" is under attack precisely in times of intensified class struggle (Eagleton 2003).

In this investigation, history as a process is defined as a field of possibilities, a vast structure of alternatives (Benjamin in Löwy 2005: 105, 107), in which the objective conditions are also the conditions of that possibility. Class struggle is not an instantiated concept moving linearly towards a specific direction but a real conflict of real people with determined positions in production and society, whose outcome is posited inside a range of possibilities, and having a high degree of contingency (Gaitanou and Gousis 2015: 139-40). Within this range of possibilities, choice, rather than being simply determined or preplanned, includes unintentional consequences, multiple different results, and a special role for the accidental and even the mistaken, whereas the subjective factor has an enhanced role. Active intervention influences and ultimately changes the correlation of forces in a dialectical interaction of the objective conditions and the subjective factor: what is today a subjective intervention, tomorrow has influenced the objective conditions themselves (Gaitanou and Gousis 2015: 138; see also Kail and Sobel 2005: 40, for conditions being subjected to transformation). In that respect, the existing situations are in fact the result of prior action, even if, in the

²⁴⁰ For Rancière, "We should have learned at last how problematic all strategies based on the analysis of social evolution may be. Emancipation can neither be the accomplishment of a historical necessity, nor the heroic reversal of this necessity. It has to be thought out of its un-timeliness, which means two things: first the absence of historical necessity for its existence, second its heterogeneity with respect to forms of experience structured by the time of domination." (2010: 176).

present, they are thought of as the only material reality. From this point emerges the distinction between the material and the “natural” conditions (Jameson 2005: 21).

Based on the above approach, I will return to the findings from the present research, focusing on the formation of the participants in the movements as agents. Since I have suggested a theoretical framework for the approach of the object/subject relationship, the point of interest here is the consciousness of those potentially acting as such agents, and its transformation through political participation in the movements. I will, first, discuss the investigation of the development of class consciousness among them, in connection to their participation. As argued in the two previous chapters, in the two main forms of movements (the movement of the squares and the strikes), class lines were not explicit. Inevitably, the strikes had a much clearer class dimension but the labour movement was unable, for reasons already discussed²⁴¹, to become the leading force of this whole period. The movement of the squares, on the other hand, was more hegemonic as a form, but class reference was less evident: on the one hand, there was a clear hesitation by participants to define their own class identity, as seen from the previous chapter. On the other hand, the structures and organization of the movement did not favour a clear class connotation.

Still, there were signs of a deepening of class consciousness in participants detectable in the interviews. First indication is their view on trade-unionism: while the confederations were totally discounted, combined with the relatively low diffusion of grassroots unions in a large scale, participants did identify differences between the grassroots unions and the confederations (in favour of the first) and still maintained the value of trade-unionism in theory²⁴². For example, they themselves describe their gradual, during the course of the movement, acceptance of, or desire for, trade-unions to be present in the squares' movement. Furthermore, although most participants highlighted the dominant tendency by the state and political power to produce

²⁴¹ In section b of chapter IV.

²⁴² Indicatively, this was clear in (I1, I8, I10, I11, I12, I13, I15, I18, I35), all of whom elaborated analytically on their view regarding the positive effects of having a union presence at the workplace, on the unification of workers that this entails, on the necessity of trade-unionism in order to defend one's interests at work etc. However, a few interviewees who tended to fully underestimate it did exist (I3, I4).

cleavages among workers (mainly during sectoral strikes which affect daily life), not a single one endorsed them as such; quite the opposite actually²⁴³. Of course, since an anti-strike reflex has indeed appeared in the Greek society, these responses are basically indicative of the effect of participation in people's consciousness.

The second indication is a, to a certain point, class discourse, though not explicitly articulated as such (thus, not fully conscious). Economic distress was a constantly recurring theme, both as a motivation for action and as a factor explaining inequality²⁴⁴. This was actually even more evident in participants coming from the more exploited social layers. Indicatively, a self-employed lawyer with her own practice saw politics and the authoritarian turn of the state as a motive for her participation (I16), while an elderly woman formerly working as a cleaner focused clearly on economic poverty and inequality²⁴⁵. This point was also evident when defining “the adversary”: many interviewees highlighted the interconnection between economic and political interests, even under the dominance of the former²⁴⁶.

Furthermore, when examining the social forces participating in the movement, in the light of the field work and the quantitative data presented in chapter IV, we can see a specific social composition consisting of the strata analytically examined in chapter III

²⁴³ (I10) and (I13) elaborated in detail on this point, but all interviewees when asked stated that they supported workers' strikes in specific sectors, even if these complicated their lives (eg. in transportation, electricity etc.)

²⁴⁴ As already shown in chapter IV, economic grievances and the gradual realization of the effects of the policies followed on one's life were the initial motivation of participants, along with a total mistrust towards the IMF and its policies. Many people spoke of this alteration in their conditions of life in terms of a shock. Indicatively: *“Everything changed! Our way of life changed! Our social level, our economic level, with all the things that happened... And it was a change... dramatic! So we had to participate, in some form of reaction”* (I23). In the second level, there emerged the patterns of political mistrust, satisfaction from participation and from “feeling useful”, and recognition of the importance of collective action.

²⁴⁵ (I17), after describing in detail the effects of the economic policies for the life of herself and her family, claimed *“When you cut my income and you tell me to pay the bills, how can I pay? Can THEY live with 500 euros a month that WE take? They should take 500 euros per month. And then we'll see... How will they live? Don't they see these things, don't they know? The thing speaks for itself. When I get up in the morning and cannot buy the necessary, and HE has his huge car, his holiday house, his excursions, and he shops and he revels... Isn't he in a better position from me? Are we the same? And then, why should I pay for what they ask for?”*

²⁴⁶ *“Neither the politicians, nor the parties, nor the governments take decisions. Our social life, anyway... our life, is controlled and led by others, either states-Great Forces, or corporates-Great Forces, and the two are tied to each other”* (I4). (I35) claimed: *“Politicians are simply trying to solve a problem with the 'easy' and, for many people, painful, way, while they don't touch others. Eg. the rich are not to pay, if possible, their interests are to be fully satisfied, and the poor people are to pay for everything, as usual”*. For (I39), *“the political system is the executive of the economic system. They are employees of the system, in a way. Big employees, but still employees. Behind them are the real economic interests. The foreign ones, and certain domestic ones, the big Greek capital, ship-owners and manufacturers”*. Similar examples were quoted in section e of chapter IV.

as members of the working class and the petty-bourgeoisie, particularly those of its layers most drastically affected by the crisis, with a greater proportion of those with higher educational backgrounds. Does this peculiar social alliance allow us to speak of the formation of a “historical bloc” in the Gramscian sense as a concrete social force (Gramsci 1971: 418)? In our view this is not the case, although the potential for such a formation existed²⁴⁷. The historical bloc expresses a social alliance hegemonized by the “fundamental class” of the mode of production, a formation which would induce “the penetration of political practice into the sphere of labour, ie. of production” (Balibar 2014: 53) and the present Greek example fails to show such a tendency in a generalized manner. The failure can be mainly attributed to the weaknesses of the political organizations, and of the Left in particular, to function as the force enabling unification of the movement at a higher level (a point to be discussed in the next section). The trade-union movement showed similar failings and the objective conditions related to the transformation of labour were also unfavourable.

At the same time, this absence of a clear class connotation present in people's consciousness is not of minor importance. Other major movements have happened in the past in which the working class was not the leading force: a characteristic example is the 1973 November insurgency, which was hegemonized by the student movement (so by the “new petty bourgeoisie” in the making). However, the discourse was at that time heavily left-wing, saturated with class references and symbols coming from the revolutionary tradition. In the current case, the lack of an explicit class dimension entailed important effects, particularly regarding the consciousness of a strategic confrontation, where a social bloc realizes the incompatibility of its interests with the socio-political system as a whole. This has also contributed to the persistence of the individualistic tendencies among the participants. These findings prove the concrete

²⁴⁷ I will provide at this point two formulations by the interviewees themselves, indicative of such a potential. (I33) argued: “*All this will leave something. The fact that at some point, some girls in high heels and some fallen yuppies were found together in the same square with people who in their last job may have been the storekeepers, or manual workers and all these people saw that... it does not mean much and it is temporary if one is favoured by a situation. And even if this is the case, that this is not enough, if you want to be a member of a society*”. For (I35): “*Everybody was expressed by these protests. Ok, we don't speak of the rich. The middle class and the poor, all those who suffered from a hard hit. They all became much poorer...*”

importance and the political specificity of the organized industrial working class, along with the significant results of its absence as an hegemonic segment of the mobilized strata. Indeed, all class societies include a “latent”, or “indirect” class reference, even the reactionary ones, and, of course, protest discourses even more: the issue here is the articulation of this class reference into consciousness, with people being aware of its own meaning. Proletarianization evidently does not induce linearly the formation of a class consciousness, if the political affordances or focuses of identification are not present. Thus, the question is the transformation of the character of consciousness from “theoretical and latent” into “active and practical” (Luxemburg 1986).

This distinction must not however be perceived in a static way. In a similar vein, the organized layer does not represent the whole of the movement: neither must the role of the relatively unorganized layer be underestimated, nor the level of political consciousness of the organized layer be overestimated (Ibid.; see also Barker 2007: 27). Ultimately, as approached in chapter III, there are two tendencies appearing at the same time in the working class, a tendency of emancipation and one of subordination²⁴⁸. For Meszáros, “consciousness can be out at the service of alienated life, just as it can envisage the supercession of alienation” (Meszáros 1971b: 88). Class consciousness is not a mental construction but *an actual potential dimension of the reality*; besides “consciousness always represents some piece of reality” (Vygotski 1987: 190). Barker has also underlined the dualities existing in the working class, both potentially unified under exploitation and divided vis-a-vis competition, thus both subject to impulses to revolt and to pressures that reproduce subordination. Such dualities mean that “popular responses... to their alienated condition might be *expected* to be both 'contradictory' and 'heterogeneous’” (Barker 2007: 14-5). It is precisely on the one hand the praxis of the masses that mediates reducing the above gap (by

²⁴⁸ This debate takes us to the Lukácsian concept of imputed consciousness (Lukács 1971; 2002) and the Gramscian “two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness)” (Gramsci 1971: 333).

producing new, collective knowledge), and on the other hand, the practical character of the organizational forms²⁴⁹.

Another point to investigate at this point is the following: what is actually the relationship of class consciousness to class position? The challenge is to avoid mechanistic approaches where a person's consciousness is assumed to be an automatic reflection of their class and origins. Barker has argued that four ambiguities in the Marxian legacy are traceable in this respect: (1) a certain form of economic determinism and evolutionism, in which consciousness is seen as a direct outcome of the experience of mobilization; (2) an underestimation of the role of reformist leaderships in mass workers' parties, attributing it simply to external factors; (3) an underestimation of the mediations in class struggle and of the political and ideological differentiations among workers; and (4) an ambiguity in the treatment of the party question, with an absence of clear answers about its character and its organizational mode (Barker 2007: 6-13). A series of mediations complexify the issue, while schemes of mere reflection fall into irrelevance due to the relative autonomy between the superstructure and the base; class reductionism is inappropriate for dealing with such complex issues. The mediations to be considered here are the dominant ideology (as examined in chapter I) and the role of organization (analyzed in the following section). The various social identities that impact on the formation of consciousness (gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc.) cannot be neglected either; while, as Bensaid (2002) underlined, relations of exploitation and class conflict in the capitalist mode of production constitute an over-determinative framework which runs through and unifies all other contradictions. Finally, the effects of the transformations in the labour process on consciousness must also be taken into account. Fragmentation, unstable employment, the low degree of concentration of workers and the employment structure (as examined in chapter III), influence the formation of a consciousness of common interests²⁵⁰. There arises again, at this point, the ambiguity of the working class in

²⁴⁹ For Gramsci, this is politics: "[Ought to be]" alone is history in the making and philosophy in the making, it alone is politics." (Gramsci 1971: 172).

²⁵⁰ This is reminiscent of the Sartrian analysis of fusion and seriality resulting to very different forms of class consciousness (Sartre 1970: 234-35).

Greece which keeps both growing and getting weaker; specifically, in terms of political constitution and experience (as examined in chapter III).

To conclude this section, four points need to be emphasized (Gaitanou and Gousis 2015: 133). Firstly, the relation between social being and consciousness must be seen in the context of the totality; as opposed to the fragmentation dominating in contemporary societies. Lukács' analysis on the totality is relevant at this point, when he notes that "For the social being of the proletariat places it *immediately* only in a relationship of struggle with the capitalists, while proletarian class consciousness becomes class consciousness proper when it incorporates a knowledge of the *totality* of bourgeois society" (Lukács 2002: 83)²⁵¹. Secondly, the relationship between an economic crisis and radicalization is crucial²⁵²: systemic crises do not necessarily produce social events, but they do create a more favourable environment for their development and their linkage to the totality. Thirdly, the role of dominant ideology is significant, since it leads to a perception of reality as natural and unchangeable making it difficult to conceive of a different way of organizing society (this point on different interpretations of reality will be dealt with in section d of the current chapter). Lastly, processes only touched on obliquely here, such as the role of linguistic signification and of discursive processes, should not be overlooked, although they have to be considered in the context of material reality, and not seen in isolation²⁵³, since they can divert attention towards less conscious desires, fantasies, motives and psychic impulses²⁵⁴.

In this sense, the movements under examination had the *potential* of inducing such a transformation in consciousness, but, as will be argued below and in the conclusions, the real impact of them has fallen short of this potential²⁵⁵. The outcomes of the real

²⁵¹ We suggest the perception of this concept in terms of "totalization", in the sense that Sartre and Jameson have used the term, to distinguish it from perceiving it as suppressing diversity and forcing homogeneity (Jameson 2005: 19).

²⁵² I have dealt with this in detail in sections a and d of chapter I.

²⁵³ "Every ideological sign is not only a reflection, a shadow of reality, but is also itself a material segment of that very reality" (Volosinov 1986: 11).

²⁵⁴ Speech produces changes in consciousness, and word meaning develops depending on consciousness transformation. Communication itself generalizes (Vygotsky 1934).

²⁵⁵ Although I consider the subjective factor to be the decisive one for this weakness, this is in contrast to a subjectivist approach. The reminder of the determinations to which an act is subjected is always present; determinations in which the human course is necessarily registered (Tertullian 2006: 67). As

struggle must not however be underestimated: the claim of an interviewee, working as a driver in public transportation and previously indifferent to politics as he stated, a former voter of PASOK, is very interesting in this respect: *“Class consciousness is acquired through struggle. If you live in such a system, socio-politico-economical, which provides you with no class consciousness, and it educates you precisely as it wants, already from school, then... you have to do something... You will participate, you will fight, you will fail, you will win certain things, and you will gradually acquire class consciousness. You aren't born with it, it becomes in the process. It is formulated. And there are people, many people in my perspective, who in this whole situation, have started formulating it. A class consciousness, which they did not have, in no case.”* (113). At this point, we have examined certain key points on the formation of subjectivity and consciousness, discussing the various conclusions emerging from this research, emphasizing the rejection of schemata of mere reflection between social being and consciousness. I shall now pass on to a key point when dealing with the formation and transformation of consciousness, which is related to the character and the role of organization.

b. Spontaneous and conscious element. Organizational forms.

“The real Organisationsfrage today is not the affirmation or negation of the party, conceived in the abstract, but rather, the question regarding the particular type of the party-form that could help these movements to continue to grow” (Thomas 2013)

A basic concept related to the formation of consciousness is the relationship between organization and spontaneity. This is one of the main issues arising from

Bourdieu has noted, “The rupture cannot result from a simple awakening of consciousness, the transformation of dispositions cannot occur without a prior or concomitant transformation of the objective structures of which they are the product and which they can survive” (Bourdieu 1998: 122).

studying the movements of the period 2010-2011 in Greece. This period was characterized by a crisis of political representation combined with the failure of the Left to provide any realistic alternative vision, while protesters demanded deeper forms of democracy involving more direct participation. As argued in the previous chapters and earlier in this chapter, weaknesses in organization have been the Achilles heel of the movements of 2010-2011, preventing them from having a greater and longer lasting impact. This underlines the importance of examining the role of organization. The role of the political party seems here, in my view, to be essential, but by no means sufficient. In contrast to emphasizing the importance of the party on the basis of an alleged weakness of the masses to make politics for themselves (restricting their role to economic protests), we think of the masses as perfectly capable of exercising politics at all three levels: the party, the front and the movement. The organized leadership is however crucial for the people to conceptualize its interests as a totality, to establish a strategic independence vis-a-vis its adversaries and to realize the irreconcilability of this interest with the socio-political system as a whole (Shandro 2007: 311). If, according to Bensaid, relations of exploitation determine all internal conflicts in capitalism, and if capital itself is the “big unifier subordinating every aspect of social production and reproduction”, then “a party [is] not simply the sum of social movements, [but] the best mediator of conscious unification” (Bensaid 2002). The masses can spontaneously realize their oppression and rebel against it, but left on their own they lack the means to emancipate themselves in a way that dissolves the political structure of oppression; thus the necessity for an organizational form (Agnoli 1972: 85-6).

Social movement theorists have also dealt with the problem of organization and its importance in the emergence of social movements in detail. Organization in RMT and PPT is thought as one of the fundamental resources of activists, although it is often approached as a means to an end. In NSMT, participation is not subjected to a cause, but an end in itself: through participation, individuals transform their own identity and create a collective one, a “we”. This approach argues that movements are informal

networks, loosely structured (or even relatively disorganized, eg. Melucci 1996: 344). In that respect, organized forms are most suited to the campaign-oriented, goal-directed mobilization of movements²⁵⁶ (Melucci 1996: 222). Leadership within organizational structures is only partly legitimized in these approaches, decision-making processes are considered less formal, and representatives are more temporary²⁵⁷ (Ibid.: 345). Other social movement theorists tend to undervalue the role of SMOs, claiming they contribute to the institutionalization and decline of a movement²⁵⁸. At the core of this approach lies the claim that “consciousness smothers spontaneity” (Tarrow 1989: 219).

Such a line of thinking has been contested by many social movement theorists whose objections we share. The findings of the present fieldwork also argue in favour of the role of organizations. Tarrow stresses that organization should not be contrasted with disruption (Ibid.: 341) and suggests a more dialectical approach to leadership, claiming that organizations “led the masses as long as there were masses to be led; but they could not lead people where they did not wish to go” (Ibid.: 342). Melucci also opposes the inevitability of bureaucratization, claiming that organizations change by following non-linear processes (Melucci 1996: 325). Seferiades rejects the linearity of the relationship between hierarchical organization and institutionalization/conventional politics by arguing against determinism: he speaks of the existence of informal groups with conventional actions and speech, as well as of hierarchical organizations that are very radical (Seferiades 2006: 29).

As Tarrow notes, “part of the reason for the confusion is that we often fail to distinguish among three different aspects of movement organization. The dominant meaning of the term is *formal hierarchical organization*... A second meaning is *the organization of collective action at the point of contact with opponents*. These range

²⁵⁶ This looseness regarding forms of organization is presumed to correspond to objective (resulting from the characteristics of postmodern identity, being hybrid and constantly changing) and subjective factors (as a conscious choice of the participants, rejecting the stricter form of organization of the labour movement).

²⁵⁷ This approach, although useful because of criticizing the rigid forms of organization, which have often proven undemocratic and inadequate, has failed in our view to respond to the imperatives of the Greek movement, as described by participants themselves above.

²⁵⁸ Organizations ostensibly tend to blunt militancy because of their vulnerability to internal oligarchy and stasis and to external integration with elites, thus destroying movements' spontaneity, routinizing and suffocating them (Piven and Cloward 1977: xxi).

from temporary assemblies of challengers, to informal networks, to formal branches, clubs, and even military-like cells.... The third meaning of organization refers to the *connective structures* that link leaders and followers, centre and periphery, and different parts of a movement sector” (Tarrow 1998: 123-24). Overall, most social movement scholars have underlined the need for organization. The crucial element here is the recognition of a dialectical relationship between organization and protest, in which organization is approached through interaction with the masses, and presupposes their active participation. Thus, to return to the initial formulation of Peter Thomas quoted at the beginning of this section, the main question is which form of organization is adequate in respect to the imperatives of a movement.

The role of the political organizations is a point appreciated by the participants in the movements themselves: despite the deep crisis of political representation, which also affected the Left (though to a lesser degree, at the time), many interviewees emphasized the theoretical necessity of an organizing form which would unite, coordinate and motivate the protesters. This was referred on the one hand to the need for trade-unions and related structures to intervene in the movement, as forms of organization of the working class²⁵⁹, and on the other hand, to the existence of political organizations able to elaborate a cohesive alternative political orientation for the movement. As for the trade-unions, participants seemed to underline both the necessity of their existence as such²⁶⁰, and the need of them co-existing and coordinating with other forms of the social movement. This comes as an objective need, but also results from trade-unionism suffering from the broader crisis of legitimation already discussed. Thus (I1), after speaking of the deficiencies of the existing trade-unionism combined with its positive aspects in theory, claimed: *“Movements must work together with trade-unions. Trade-unions must be an active part but other collective forms must also exist,*

²⁵⁹ This comes in contrast to Piven and Cloward (1977), as well as Lumley (1990), who denounce unions as forms completely external to the movements, which structurally aim to deescalate, institutionalise, control and constrict them.

²⁶⁰ (I8) claimed, when speaking of the necessity for trade-unions to be parts of the movement of the squares: *“The connection with trade-unions in the square should be greater. Workspaces should be present and... they should be the vanguard. This would help as a means of rallying the people, and of workers being part of all this. Then, workspaces would unite, they would... coordinate and participate all together, because when they go on strike separately, this does not help, it is meaningless. The basic thing is for all to be there, united”.*

other initiatives of the people, and all these forms must be coordinated". This need also comes from the realization that trade-unions themselves cannot respond to the broader issue of political orientation. For (I6), *"Through a trade-union you can demand certain things. But they... they cannot speak of broader changes, of an overthrow. This cannot be accomplished by a trade-union alone. A movement; this has broader, more fundamental goals"*.

Indeed, many participants attributed the weakness of the movements under discussion to accomplish more concrete long-term outcomes, to the lack of a more centrally articulated political plan. (I8) claimed speaking of his view on whether that his participation in the movement was worth it: *"Yes. And yes, I do think that a movement can have concrete results. The results I have seen so far are mostly in the consciousness level of course. But.. for something to actually change, we must go further. ... I mean.... nothing is over. I cannot say that we have tried it, we saw what happened and its over, let's say. I think it is able to... But it needs something more. It needs the contribution of political subjects, yes, this is it."* Some participants claimed to have realized that spontaneity through participation alone is insufficient. (I26), when asked if she would mobilize in the same way today, responded that *"I would, in the 80%. But today I would participate more critically. If I now look back at this whole struggle and my participation, I would try to contribute at creating organizations; a collectivity, in which we would discuss and decide for the next steps. This is the first thing I would have in mind. Not only spontaneity! Let's do this! Because this is how you can go further."* (I36) argued characteristically: *"What was missing was organization. And the objective of the next step. Ok, we went there and we shouted. And let's say we accomplished our target. And then? Then what? How will we manage all this? Which are the mechanisms? And there must be mechanisms! Who will manage all these people? All this indignation?"*.

However, in contrast to the trade-unions, which consist of a structure identifiable as such by the people, the narrative is not equally clear when the discussion moves to the need for political coordination, in the sense of specific organizational forms. (I18)

claimed: *“A certain organization must definitely exist. If not, there will be chaos. People cannot coordinate by themselves. Some people must be more active, organizing, coordinating. The problem is... who these people should be, and how will they be appointed. But definitely, some forms of organization are necessary, some groups... But they must be both informed and leading people towards the right direction, they must be uninfluenced by others, they must have a purpose and serve it faithfully, they must be devoted.”* Hesitation in arguing for specific organizational forms which would accomplish such imperatives was evident in most interviewees.

Participants in the movements exercise, further, a strict critique towards the existing political organizations; basically, towards the formations of the Left in Greece, as examined in chapters IV and V. The party form as such was perceived as necessary for the majority of participants in the interviews²⁶¹. However, several interviewees were apprehensive about the sheer idea, believing that it inevitably leads to antidemocratic practices²⁶². This apprehension is related to a general mistrust of power and its tendency to corrupt²⁶³. The main critique by participants referred both to the structural deficiencies of the Left and the party-form, and to its specific intervention in the movements under study. As for the first, they focused on its rigid, even antidemocratic, constitution, the suppression of freedom in its internal functioning, its “stereotyped” and incomprehensible language, and its indifference towards the interests of the people. However, critiques at this level did not go very deep. This was to be expected, since I

²⁶¹ (I10) noted: *“Parties always existed. Since the ancient Greece, the Byzantium.. Human nature cannot probably be organized otherwise. I can accept this. Thus the party is necessary. Political groupings are necessary, I don't know how to formulate this, I don't like the term, well, being in a group, being broadly in line with some people, yes. This is probably necessary, yes”*. Many participants describe a view of parties as the “necessary evil”, eg. (I10): *“We cannot avoid them, they are the necessary evil, do you understand?”*

²⁶² (I6), when questioned whether he thought that all parties would objectively be led to such deviations, he answered: *“Probably yes. How could this not be? I cannot imagine a different way.. In what other way could this work? But I don't know, we haven't experienced a better way, maybe...”* The role of experience is to be highlighted here. Nevertheless, it should be noted at this point that similar antidemocratic deviations have emerged in the forms of the movement as well, and especially in the assemblies, as examined in detail in section e of chapter IV.

²⁶³ Many interviewees insisted, as mentioned, that the Left was not exactly part of the broader picture of political delegitimation, because it had not yet gained power, claiming that, if it did, it would present the same deficiencies with the rest political parties. (I1) claimed *“I think that if the Left gains power, it will reproduce the same problems, this is why I feel like I am pushed towards more radical views, towards those who reject power”*.

chose to interview people who had little or no prior political involvement, thus little or no experience of participation in political forms.

Participants focused more on a critique towards the attitude of the Left in the movements under study. I have claimed in chapter IV that this attitude has been ambivalent, oscillating between the submission to the spontaneity of the movement and an external critique, often accompanied by abstaining from any participation, as was the case with the KKE. Interviewees focused more on a “selfish” attitude which they attributed to the Left, seeking to dominate over the movement for its own purposes, widely perceived as different from, or even antagonistic to, those of the people, or of the movements. Thus, (I8) claimed that *“The Left could have organized the people, instead of seeking to take them on its side. It could have tried to help them... and provide of course its political beliefs, but... I think those who know how to organize, should be a little more... honestly helpful. For example, the KKE in the very old times: it went down on strikes and helped, irrespectively of whether it had its own members in them or not. The Left has indeed disappointed me in the movement. I didn’t like the fact that it was negative towards it in the beginning, nor that it tried to dominate in it afterwards. I would like for the Left to have honestly endorsed it. I think that in that way, both the Left and the society would have things to gain”*.

This inadequacy of political organizational forms has led to the inability for a “common will” to be formed and organized. The above formulations bring in mind the role of the political party as elaborated by Gramsci when speaking of the modern prince: “The modern prince, the myth-prince, cannot be a real person, a concrete individual. It can only be an organism, a complex element of society in which a collective will, which has already been recognized and has to some extent asserted itself in action, begins to take concrete form. History has already provided this organism, and it is the political party - the first cell in which there come together germs of a collective will tending to become universal and total” (Gramsci 1971: 129). This modern prince is not restricted to its articulation in the form of the party nor to its institutional dimension: the latter being definitive, it is however “the tip of the iceberg of

a broader process of collective political activation of the popular classes, in all of the instances of deliberation and decision-making throughout the society” (Thomas 2013). Thus, the difficulties lie in the presence and role of leadership, its interconnection to the broader political activation of the people and the power relations developing within the various political organizations.

The overwhelming theoretical question emerging here is the relationship between the political party and the spontaneous movements of the people. “The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves”, was the first sentence of the Rules of the International Workingmen’s Association in 1867. According to Shandro (Shandro 1995: 269), “this thesis involves two claims: first, that the working class is capable of autonomous revolutionary activity in the sense that its struggles need not be subordinated to the ends of others... Second, the end and aim of proletarian emancipation, the supercession of capitalism and the construction of a socialist society can be attained only through the independent activity of the working class.” Marx and Engels emphasized that “against the collective power of the propertied classes the working class cannot act, as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes” (Marx 2010c: 201). They did not, however, develop a coherent theory of the party in its concrete form any further, but only described different party models at various historical moments²⁶⁴ (Johnstone 1967: 122).

Later elaborations attempted to deal with the organizational forms of the political subject and its relationship with the spontaneous element of the masses²⁶⁵. A well-known debate based on the Leninist elaborations on organizational forms and the

²⁶⁴ They did however draw certain methodological lines, eg. organizational forms are thought to be dynamic; interrelated with the development of the social movement, rather than static and predetermined (Ibid.: 135).

²⁶⁵ For Žižek, the role of the political subject in the concrete form of the political party, is undeniable, otherwise movements seem condemned to a vicious cycle of resistance, which, in the absence of the party, will be a form of “politics without politics” (Žižek 2001). Lewis proposes the notion of a dialectical alliance between spontaneity and organization (Lewis 2007: 288). For Thomas, the party-form must be thought neither as simply acting in favour of a composition of different elements in a period of multiple movements and demands (following the Negri-Hardt analysis), nor as a laboratory for a totalizing political subject (in the Lukácsian sense), but as integrating both compositional and totalizing dimensions (Thomas 2013). The Gramscian analysis on the organic intellectuals is also relevant at this point (Gramsci 1971: 5-14).

political party, refers to his formulation of consciousness coming to the working class “from without”²⁶⁶. This thesis supports an understanding of this formulation as referring to consciousness coming from beyond the realm of the purely economic struggle, and not as coming from elements external to the class, acting as a *deus ex machina* (thus discounting the ability of the masses to produce political activity by themselves)²⁶⁷. Lenin started from the internal contradictions of the working class of which we spoke above; having both a spontaneous tendency towards socialism, and a tendency to be manipulated because of it being the “repository of bourgeois ideology” (Shandro 2007: 309). This spontaneous dialectics of consciousness has limits, therefore the spontaneous element must at the same time be fostered, guided and even combated (Shandro 2007: 309). This echoes another finding from this fieldwork: although participants were keen to realize the need of organizational forms, an individualism and insistence on “personal freedom” as an ultimate value was evident in their whole perspective, as examined in section b of chapter V²⁶⁸. This is, in my estimation, both due to the weakness of the Left to actively engage people in an alternative collective plan, and the prevalence of neoliberal ideology; the two being evidently in dialectical interaction.

As Bensaid (2002) has underlined, this is precisely what the specificity of the political field is about: the political field does not simply express a reflection or an extension of the social correlation of forces. It is the ground for the transformation of social relations and class struggle in political terms, with its own, as psychoanalysts would say, displacements and condensations. Thus, the truth is neither objectively defined nor *simply out there*, and reinforcement of the level of consciousness is not merely related to “enlightenment” or a cognitive clarification, but is directly related to

²⁶⁶ “Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside of the economic struggle, outside of the sphere of relations between workers and employers”, (Lenin 1950a: 204).

²⁶⁷ In accordance with Althusser who, quoting Lenin, claimed that he did not want to assume an enhanced role for the intellectuals, but for revolutionary theory and a revolutionary political party; thus he aimed at fending off economism (2006: 22).

²⁶⁸ Thus, (I15) clearly stated that “*Syntagma was a form which contained no parties. It expressed a common ground of people wanting the same thing, independent of their ideology. I.. I don't believe in ideologies. That's it*”. And (I20) argued against participating in a party by saying: “*I don't want to. I want to be able to leave whenever I want. If you are there, you are stigmatized. What's the reason to participate if I don't agree 100%? If I agreed 100%, then maybe... Maybe then I would feel that it would worth it. Until now I have not felt that.*”

social transformation, in the sense of constituting an act which intervenes in the given circumstances and transforms them (Gaitanou and Gousis 2015: 138). For Barker, “individual and collective 'emancipation' or 'liberation' is an at once 'practical' and 'cognitive' process involving changing the self and societal relations”²⁶⁹ (Barker 2007: 21). This is the reason why no political party can claim the monopoly on expressing the interests of, or represent, the working class: from this emerges the potential of multipartism. Further, these imperatives call for more open forms of political organization, which will dialectically interact with the actual movement of people, being open by the movements' inventiveness and ready to experiment with new forms and structures.

This quest of an open political form was raised explicitly by some of the participants. (I8) claimed: *“A political space more open, socially, can be very useful. Useful for the radicalization of the people, for their participation, for a material contribution, all these things that can help us all cope with our daily lives. Closed structures, in which those who are already radicalized stay with each other, cannot offer much. These people are even anti-social. Such forms must have an actual target, and they must really try to be socially useful”*. For (I11), *“we need more fluid structures. Structures that will be more accessible to the people. And more... free. Structures that will not function like cliques. Because I think parties function a bit like cliques. And they end up alienating the persons who participate in them. The members are alienated by the party.”*

Finally, the emergence of class struggle, in any form, never emerges or progresses exactly as planned by the political organizations intervening in it: a movement seen as exactly determined in advance is an abstract theoretical schema²⁷⁰ (Luxembourg 2004: 172-3). Some participants expressed indeed the hope that the lesson of the movements under discussion will be taken; in correspondence with Thomas who

²⁶⁹ In a similar vein, possession of knowledge is not itself like possessing an object: it is equivalent to the insertion of the individual into a network, in which individuality is at the same time demanded and contested, and the cognitive process is itself a practice (Balibar 2014: 218-9).

²⁷⁰ For Gramsci, “reality produces a wealth of the most bizarre combinations” and “it is not reality which should be expected to conform to the abstract schema. This will never happen, and hence this conception is nothing but an expression of passivity.” (Gramsci 1971: 200).

argues that the party-form must be “immanent to the 'content' of contemporary movements” (Thomas 2013)²⁷¹. (I31) claimed that *“taking into account how things are, in Greece, the way that most people, we, feel about parties, politics, corruption etc.; probably only something like [the movement of] Syntagma square could bring us close”*. And for (I37): *“Those people who are more enlightened, and who gained experience by the Syntagma [square movement], must try, through parties and other forms, to prove that they have actually received the messages of the times. So that we arrive at something new, that we have not seen before. And probably we cannot even guess it, and will be a mixture. A mixture of both having a political opinion and arguing for it, AND gaining actual respect... by everyone. I want to see this from people in politics. I don't ask for them to lose their political identity, their ideas etc.. Only to feel freer.”*

At this point, after discussing the main features of political organization, I will now pass to the final section of this thesis: the exploration of the conception of the political, after the experience of political participation in the movements under study.

c. Politics of emancipation.

“I shall therefore ask the limit-question (the hardest question is always the best)”²⁷² (Althusser 2006: 13)

The question to be raised at this point can be formulated as follows: what is the actual meaning and role of politics, under the perspective adopted in this thesis, i.e. in relation to the development of social movements in times of crisis? The challenge is to

²⁷¹ For Sotiris, this means being open towards the inventiveness of the movements, ready to experiment with new forms and structures; in the sense of a laboratory of constant political experimentation, a mechanism of counter-hegemony and a learning process, in a vital dialectics of theory and practice and in conditions of anti-hierarchical and participatory democracy (Sotiris 2012b: 66).

²⁷² We would however endorse Kouvelakis' view when dealing with the *problem* of the political in Marx's thought: “a problem is however not the same thing with a 'lacuna' or an 'absolute limit', it is rather the sign of a thought which is in search, explores its internal contradictions by displacing its relation with the real that exceeds it, and, by doing so, it gives us already 'open' outcomes, themselves awaiting resumption” (Kouvelakis 2015: 3).

formulate a non-instrumental approach, based on the analysis of the participation in the movements that developed in Greece in times of crisis. This requires thinking about politics in its specificity and conceptualizing a political form, in the sense of not simply referring to the whole of the institutional and state superstructures, but also to an “active determination”, a process of being and transformation in the course of emancipation (Kouvelakis 2015: 2). Politics is something more than the exercise of power (but not beyond it); it is actually a “mode of acting”, a political relationship which allows us “to think of the possibility of a political subject(ivity), not the other way around” (Rancière 2001). Self-organization of the masses is not simply an instrument of, but a precondition for, social transformation. Furthermore, class struggle always exists in mediated forms, and classes cannot be defined as homogeneous and uniform political entities with explicitly defined causes. Classes are to be understood as “corresponding to common but non-identical practices and interests, a nominalist description of real multiplicity” (Thomas 2013). Simultaneously, class struggles do not always and equally include all workers (Barker 2007: 14).

Politics is perceived exactly in that sense: not as a sphere separate from the other ones, but as the expression of surmounting the fragmentation into separate spheres and of the possibility of a potentially unifying dynamics, of an hegemonic dimension that enables the re-establishment of the whole, in its internal articulation with the partial. Social transformation cannot thus be perceived as inducing the end of politics, as if people were to achieve self-fulfillment at the individual and collective levels once and for all. In that case, the only stake would be a “technical” management of affairs for the normal functioning of the whole, in a somehow perfect human society²⁷³. Such an approach would culminate either in a technological dystopia or an authoritarian system of social organization, in which people would be the perfect non-human beings.

On the contrary, politics, and thus democracy, are to be comprehended as ways of life, as *an art of life*. From this point of view, they also express ways of transition and of

²⁷³ At the philosophical level, this takes us back to the Gramscian argument about the historicist character of philosophy of praxis, and its nature as an expression of historical contradictions, which thus is bound to be superseded (Gramsci 1971: 405). Only to add that, “This is not to say that utopia cannot have a philosophical value, for it has a political value and every politics is implicitly a philosophy” (Ibid.).

organization of society, as well as processes of constant self-transformation, democratization and learning: processes of constituting the people as a collective subject. Democracy and politics are not remotely simple means or instruments, but determinants of the autonomy of the subject, as inherent to the concept of freedom. Realization of freedom being the essence of the socialized human, social transformation requires a long practice, involving processes of collective life and self-institution. Thus, political organization is not simply conceived as preparation for an objective to be pursued in the future, but as the articulation in the present of concrete aspects of the tendency towards a different organization of society (Sotiris 2014: 231).

From such a perspective, the experience of the social movements in Greece in the first period of the crisis has much to offer in terms of the practice of the constitution of the movements and of the perspective they bring on rethinking the political. Their experimentation with structures and forms of protest, their very constitution, have dealt with such issues at the levels of both discourse and praxis. The intensification of class struggle has also increased politicization, leading to the emergence of new political forms and challenges. It has forced the dominant class to engage with politics, and to allow the state to use, control and repress the working class (Balibar 2014: 162). These thoughts were reflected in most interviewees' perception when discussing politics: while initially confused and hesitant towards the conception of politics outside its official forms, in the course of the discussion, they all stated clearly that they understood their participation in the movements as exercising politics. According to (I2), *"in the assemblies, there was the sense that what was going on was very serious. This is why most people returned the next day. No one thought of it as funny, or simply relieving. They saw their presence very seriously, the fact that people with different concerns met there, in the square. They all narrated a similar story: 'I leave my child with my mother and come here every night, or I come right after my job, before going home'. There was the need of an actual, an essential change. Things were not posited in a very organized political context, that is true, the debate was not political in the strict definition of the term. However, in my view, it was essentially political."*

Such a self-institution is not a *situation* but a continuous *process* without an endpoint. The struggle for democracy is something which will never be integrally fulfilled. The point is, to reach a critical limit of transcendence: a rupture consisting of the transition into a different mode of organizing society. Real democracy is a moment in a dialectical process, with continuities and discontinuities, in the course of conquering autonomy and approaching the realization of the socialized human being. Thus, the end of politics will have the meaning of the end of official politics as it is currently comprehended, and determined by domination. This current definition conceptualizes politics as the separate exercise of power by a body of experts in political knowledge and bureaucracy, and as a privilege, an expression and satisfaction of the partial interest, falsely projected as universal. This is the view of politics to which Greek activists have striven to oppose. But this in no way signifies the end of the political as such. Political participation contributes decisively to the deepening of politicization and of a potential radicalization of those participating. This was evident to participants themselves: for (I32), *"this whole thing has put me into a process of searching things, investigating what is going on, why things are the way they are, why things are different in the social level and different in the political one."* (I1) claimed that *"all discussions have changed, they don't refer to 'what happened today, where were you, what did you do, how are you'. They all refer to what is going on in the social and the political level, around us, because this is what matters for us all"*. This is reminiscent of Marx performing the crucial reversal in Hegel's perception of the political as a force of conservation (as the reproduction of the existing status quo): politics is perceived by him as a process of *refusal and transformation of the existing status quo*. This expresses a radical version of the recognition of the distinction between reality and existence, in which the determinative element is the application of the criterion of praxis, a turn towards the philosophy of praxis.

The demand of human autonomy, from the viewpoint of a philosophy of praxis, has a political and social content, rather than a simply anthropological one. Thus, it is directly linked to the social issue: if politics has par excellence a strategic dimension,

abstract democratic ideals are not to be perceived antithetical to the existing material reality. The democratic issue is not posited as external, or on a different plane from the one of material life, but integral to it. It expresses a revolutionary process which is intended both to achieve freedom and the solution of the social issue (consisting of inequality and poverty). According to Chrysis, such a theory of democracy aims at founding politics in the social field: as an intervention precisely in the same field where inequality is produced and reproduced (Chrysis 2014: 113). Again the Greek case has much to offer: it expressed a unique combination of both, realizing in a sense such a connection, as I have examined in detail. Mobilized against the memorandums and the violent effects of the economic crisis, participants in movements simultaneously posited issues of democracy and political constitution. Interviewee (I19) gave an interesting insight into this perception: *“Speaking of the squares, well, we can do politics! Based on what we are experiencing, we can do politics. Our voice can be heard, they can actually see our needs, they are obliged to stop seeing us as numbers. They cannot say ‘you have 500 euros per month to live, and this is enough’ while they don’t have a clue what’s that like. While for them, the 500 euros last for one day. For some hours, for their shoes! And you? You cannot pay the rent, you cannot go to the supermarket, you need or want something but you cannot acquire it because you lack the money. Well no. From that point of view, we can do politics!”*

Bensaid (2010) spoke of communism as a “regulating strategic hypothesis”, determining decisively the today of social protests, and not simply alluding to a vague future. In a similar vein, for Badiou the communist hypothesis is the hypothesis of emancipation. In Rancière's interpretation, this means that communism is intrinsic to practices of emancipation, being a form of universality constructed by those practices (Rancière 2010: 167). Such a statement bears the burden of potentially suggesting constructing small communist utopias or enclaves within capitalism²⁷⁴, a problem with which I will deal with right below, in relation to the fundamental question of political

²⁷⁴ Holloway's statement on the character of a self-managed park in a district of Athens after the December 2008 revolt is very indicative of such a tendency: In the SWP conference on Marxism in 2010 in London, in his speech on the idea of communism, he claimed that the park was “the communism itself, revolution itself!” (Callinicos, Holloway and Zizek 2010).

power. However, at this point I would like to stress the emphasis of the above statement on “universality” and on emancipation as a process of consciousness transformation, in relation to the self-organization and self-management of the masses. Equality being a starting point rather than simply a goal and intelligence being one, rather than divided, Rancière defined emancipation as “the appropriation of this intelligence which is one, and the verification of the potential of the equality of intelligence” (Ibid.: 168). He also stressed the contradiction within such a statement: while the communist hypothesis is possible on the basis of emancipation, meaning the collectivization of the power of anyone, the communist movement has at the same time been permeated by the inegalitarian presupposition of multiple divisions (of intelligence, fragmentation, pedagogy etc.) (Ibid.: 171). As Barker has noted, “‘subaltern cultures’ contain a variety of potentials for development: being anything but homogeneous, they are fields of dialogue and contest” (2007: 17).

Participants in the movements of 2010-2011 seem to attest the failure of political organizations in Greece to confront such limits and contradictions; failing to stimulate the self-activation of the masses, the structures and experiments emerging from their movement, and to propose a credible path to the deepening of democracy at all levels. Aspects of this debate have been incorporated, both into the developing political dialogue and into protesters’ decisions and processes, in two ways: an active and a defensive, both of which have been thoroughly examined in this thesis. The defensive aspect of activists’ reaction is the sharp critique against the existing political parties and organizations of the Left. The active aspect is the development of structures of self-organization and forms of protest which facilitated direct participation into both action and political decisions. Such experiments and structures of popular self-acting and inventiveness, of collective will, of labour organization, of antifascist-antiracist action and solidarity, have the potential to function as constituent forms of the people, thus as structures of emancipation and consciousness transformation. Such active or hidden networks of support may have “powerful transforming effects on working people and their social relations, empowering them, posing ultimate issues to do with ‘control’, and

providing a different route to politicization. It is not a matter of discounting 'idealism', but of discovering its concrete practical content and thus its developmental potentials" (Barker 2007: 29-30). Such structures can also guarantee the persistence of participation; par excellence in response to repression. As (I3) said, *"Well, despite the troubles and police violence, people felt the need to defend what was happening there... Because, you know, I think that most people felt it like their own. So, they had a great need to defend it, I don't know, at least this is how I felt, that I am here, and I will fight for it, I won't just leave"*.

These experimental processes are not effective just at the ideological level, through the generation and transformation of consciousness, but also on the material one, through "the production and/or imposition of faits accomplis" (Shandro 2007: 322). The structures of the Greek movement, and particularly of the squares, have experimented with different political tactics and organizational proposals (thus their demands for constitutional assembly, the practical measures on the functioning of the assemblies, the insistence on more direct democratic measures etc.). Far from simply prefiguring some future society, since they are largely determined by the struggle against their opponent (the state and the political power), such efforts express a conflict concerning the question of the political in its relation with the struggle for emancipation (Kouvelakis 2015: 30). They have, of course, often being led to the reproduction of respective problems and limits, of the danger of simple moral invocations, or apotheosizing the spontaneous element to the detriment of the organizational form²⁷⁵.

Furthermore, implied above and in opposition to approaches which focus on the appeal of power rather than its seizure (Holloway 2010 being indicative)²⁷⁶, we endorse the argument by Bensaid, that social relations cut across the field of institutions and of political representation, thus it is futile to pretend to ignore this very simple fact (Bensaid 2006: 183). A transformative process does not emerge out of a void, but

²⁷⁵ These deficits were examined in section e of chapter IV and section f of chapter V.

²⁷⁶ These approaches imply the creation of islets of communism inside capitalism, ostensibly at/on a different level from that of social organization. According to Bensaid's apt formulation, they simply evade reality in order to find refuge in abstraction (Bensaid 2006: 178-179). For an analytical critique of these approaches with respect to the 2008 December revolt in Greece, see (Gousis 2009).

matures in the contradictions of the existing situation, thus it requires a struggle for hegemony. For Toscano “communism cannot be separated from the problem — rather than the programme — of its realization”, thus “it can also not be separated from the question of power.” According to the author, “for the problem of communism and power to be even posed without falling into the usual traps, we need to overcome the apparent antinomy between communism as the name for a form of political organization with social transformation as its aim, and communism as a form of social and economic association with social equality as its practice²⁷⁷... In trying to overcome the antinomy between organization and association, between the instruments and the everyday practice of communism, we are obliged to address the question of power. But we cannot blithely reduce this question to the dimension of the state.” (Toscano 2010: 202). For Rancière (2001), the way to be led to such a reduction of the political to the state, is to accept “the supposed purification of the political, freed from domestic and social necessity”²⁷⁸. Or, as Harvey posits it more vividly, “Enough of relationalities and immaterialities! How about concrete proposals, actual political organization, and real actions?” (Harvey 2009).

Finally, moving away from any form of class reductionism, the development of all different forms of protest may contribute to this broader process of consciousness transformation. I have implied the existence of an approach combining the potential of unification into a broader mobilization with a strategic orientation which is also respectful of differences and autonomy, throughout the whole thesis. All these different forms and structures deal with the need for coordination, joint action and cohesion, in order to be effective as a force for unification²⁷⁹. Their constitution, based on the awareness of common interests and the opposition to a common enemy founded on

²⁷⁷ “It is the least one can say that in the twentieth century the relations between crafting the means for the conquest of power and enacting the transformation of everyday life have been immensely problematic, and that the very notion of a ‘politics of producers’, to use the Marxian formulation, has been overwhelmed by historical conflicts that have left the legacies of commune, council and soviet, with some rare exceptions, in a state of abeyance”, as he continues (Toscano 2010: 202).

²⁷⁸ The elaborations of Althusser (1980: 13; although the main point at issue of the class struggle is still the state, politics should not be defined exclusively as to the state) and Balibar (2014; speaking of the need of “another practice of politics”) are also relative on this matter.

²⁷⁹ As Sartre has underlined, such a unification must not be considered as certain or be taken for granted (1974: 134).

exploitation, is a condition for restraining fragmentation. Their challenge is to maintain an “open and irreducible relation between the *unitary* moment, which falls to the political organization of the class, and the moments of self-government, the councils, the fused groups” (Sartre 1970: 248). Therefore, a common collective identity can be formed, based on the Leninist schema of “unity in diversity”, meaning an effort of unification into a collective subject of subversion which transcends, without neglecting, its internal contradictions, and recognizes the relative autonomy of the different strata.

The interviews show a pattern of participants appreciating such a need. They seemed to emphasize both the need for such a unification, and for respecting differences and diversities. For (I33) for example, this unification must not mean “homogenization”: *“This homogenization is not desired. This would be kind of fascist: to ask everyone to agree or disagree with things that each person experiences differently; even the same fact, the same incident, the same taste, the same food, the same music. But if we agree that the minimum accord and the minimum condescension is necessary for a society to function, we can thus say that my own thought might help precisely this, that... You know something? Yes, that me and you, who are in different courses of life, are experiencing the same problems. What can we do about that?”* To quote Audre Lorde (Lorde 1984) when speaking of the feminist movement, “differences must not be merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic”. In this unifying process, the role of the movements is crucial. As interviewee (I35) put it: *“This blurred and undetermined thing that each person had in their minds in their own way (and this was evident: you could find among the five thousands in the square, at least two thousand perceptions of what was happening: one was fired, another lost her salary... perceptions of what was happening to us all were promiscuous)... Yes, but through discussions and demonstrations and the whole story happening there, this mixed thing was suddenly in line. And in the end, it was gathered into a unique perspective... This was, in my opinion, the most important factor of these protests”*.

Here comes again the role of the party for this unification to happen. Indeed, the “modern prince” takes the form of a politics of a constant united front of the popular classes, in which unity is accomplished actively inside the struggle, even, and mostly, through productive conflicts (Thomas 2012). It “includes within it processes of disaggregation and conflictuality as constitutive moments”, meaning that unity is not thought of in terms of identity and homogeneity but “in terms of constitutive difference as the precondition of processes of unification that necessarily always remain ‘incomplete’”, in the sense that unification presupposes differentiation, “in an expansive dialectic without definitive synthesis” (Thomas 2013). It aims at furthering their process of becoming concrete rather than fusing them into an identity or submitting them to a sovereign instance. Thus, the party-form functions as the active organizational synthesis of all these levels and instances, “capable of effecting the political recomposition of the class, representing, expressing and thereby transforming its myriad interests and forms”, conceived “as a laboratory for processes of unification of these differences”, gathering up the partial collective wills already in motion (Ibid.).

This collective identity and its formation in, and through, struggle is itself a process of political constitution, since identities are no more than political processes in progress (Badiou 2014: 13). Political participation is a crucial factor in the transformation of the consciousness of the difference: “If the plural subject is constituted in the course of its performative action, then it is not already constituted, which means that whatever form it has before its performative exercise, it is not the same as the form it takes during the action and after the action” (Butler 2014: 58). This “unity in diversity” does not refer merely to individuals, but also to relations between groups. Coordinations become a sort of nomadic forms, moving from one group to another, revealing the potential of coordinating protests through constituting a common front (Kouvelakis 2007: 99-100). This is a concrete articulation of the universal and the particular, of the whole and the partial, where one commences from the partial as if this contains the whole. For Meszároš, universality is to be conceived “as *inherent* in, and not as *opposed* to, dynamically evolving particularity” (Meszároš 1971a: 1). This leads to the *realization* of

universality rather than its *negation* (Ibid.: 1-2). Thus, connections are not formed simply based on solidarity, but on the basis of common interests, common demands and mobilization.

In other words, and speaking in Gramscian terms, this effort of unification through organizational forms in the sense of “unity in diversity” requires creating the roots, here and now, of another way of organizing society, not as islets of communism inside capitalism accepting the partial as such, but as the material base of change, the articulation of the partial with the whole, the material challenge of capitalist hegemony. This has been the implicit goal, and what has been at stake in the social movements developing in Greece in the first, intense period of the crisis. Its potential realization has been contradictory, and certainly incomplete. Still, it remains an experience with much to offer. At this point, I have examined the fundamental theoretical points arising from this research with respect to subjectivity and consciousness formation and transformation, and I have articulated a theoretical approach of the political, in relation to popular participation. I have shown the related processes that developed during the movements under examination to be contradictory, with potentials especially in respect to popular identification of the stakes, and certain weaknesses in their completion.

I have identified the main factors for these weaknesses, emphasizing the role of the subjective factor (acting as the primary factor in specific *moments*, which force together the essential tendencies of the process, Lukács 2002: 55; Lenin 1964: 213-214). I have, at the same time, insisted on the structural, objective determinations of the environment and the conjuncture, opposing an approach based on a radical indeterminacy, according to which anything could happen at any time²⁸⁰. This is why I have chosen to examine these factors in chapters II and III. In the next final section of the thesis, I will have the opportunity to sum up the fundamental conclusions resulting from my field research in relation to the theoretical points posited in this thesis covering the economic and the political crisis in Greece, with particular focus on popular

²⁸⁰ This is the conception of insurrection as an *art*. If instead the “moment” is to be thought as turned into “the abstract falsehood of a permanently decisive influenceability of the process”, then insurrection as an art would be turned into insurrection as a game, and this debate would end up into “an empty phraseology of subjectivism” (Lukacs 2002: 59).

perception of the political. The political conjuncture of the years following the 2010-2011 period will be briefly evaluated from the perspective of the movements and the transformations examined here.

CONCLUSIONS: SOCIAL MOVEMENT AS A RUPTURE IN CONTINUITY

“These things have never happened again; never. For something to be effective in the overall, time must pass by. We will go through many challenges, many mistakes will be made, this is normal. First of all, this is something new. But the fact that the initiative was there, that people who thought of it and started it, were there, they were present, they did it... well this can only lead to a positive outcome. Someone.. ok, maybe someone could find all this ineffective, because it did not have a concrete outcome in their life. This is not right. When something new is starting, when for example you try to fix a furniture, a table... the most probable is that when you fix it, you will put the glass on it and... it will break! The fact that you bought the materials, and you nailed the nails and... You sat down and you tried and you constructed it... Well this... This is politics.” (I21)

The development, structures and forms of the movement act as a catalyst in the formation and transformation of the consciousness of those who have been part of it. This is, as argued, neither a linear, nor an evolutionary process: the actual movement of real people intervenes decisively at certain crucial moments, which encapsulate the essential tendencies of the process²⁸¹. Such an active intervention by the people themselves transforms the balance of forces, shifting in a dialectical way the interaction

²⁸¹ This “moment” comes in the sense of the Lukácsian “*Augenblick*”: the moment when there is an opening for an act to intervene in the current situation (Lukács 2002: 55). It is precisely in those moments that the subjective factor is most determinant and functions as the primary force.

between the objective forces and the subjective factor. Practice in its turn is constituted and developed in leaps and ruptures, rather than linearly. This approach is central to the way I have dealt with the movements as an important “moment” amid the turbulent Greek situation, proving both potentialities and limitations which were to become evident in the years that followed and until the present day. At this point, on the basis of my research, I will formulate the following thesis: although the 2010-2011 movements in Greece had the dynamics, scope, repertoire of action, initial resources and depth to bring more concrete changes to the socio-political landscape, their real impact has fallen short of this potential. I have argued that the causes of this failure are predominantly related to weaknesses of the broader “subjective factor”, and not to the objective conditions, its limits and limitations, though these did exist and have been thoroughly studied. At the same time, the Left has proven incapable of transcending the fragmentation, the strategic and programmatic insufficiency and the lack of vision pervasive in its various factions. This conclusion does not mean that these movements have lacked any significant concrete outcome, both at the material/practical and the ideological levels. However, it underlines the necessity of reading the study of the transformative effects of action bearing in mind both the potentialities and the weaknesses of that period. Having said that, this has evidently the danger of speaking of an “absence”, even more an absence signifying a *diversion* from a regulative ideal, irrespective of the particular moment, locus, articulation of capital, historical and class conjuncture. This is neither my objective nor my perspective, as developed in this thesis. Nevertheless, the Greek case has proven ideal for testing precisely a case in which a *moment* signifies an opening for an act to intervene, when the subjective factor is determinant. Further, interviewees themselves have often highlighted such “absences”, reflecting on *what could have been done*.

In general, my field work, using interviews with people participating in the protests of 2010-2011 but without any prior political commitment or concrete participation, confirms first and foremost what was formulated in theory in chapter II: the prevalence of a deep crisis of political representation. This refers to the entire political system, the

political parties and their representatives, but mainly to the particular political parties in power at the time (PASOK and ND), as examined in detail in chapter V. This has been deeply destabilizing for the functioning of the political system. Political destabilization has been growing for many years, exacerbated by a lack of an adequate political representation and by the resulting failure of the people to identify with or to be actively engaged with a strategic perspective. During the period under study, the overall political scene as previously known and tacitly accepted, has progressively collapsed, with efforts to shore it up or restructure it, at best, only partially successful. The social mobilizations of 2010-2011 exacerbated this crisis of legitimacy of the parties, and of the political system in general, leading to a bout of political maneuvering²⁸², culminating in the double elections of May and June 2012. These elections underlined the depth of the crisis and the intensity of social polarization. They also highlighted the weakness of the traditional political system to resist destabilization and its inability to produce a viable political alternative: “The elections of May were those of de-aggregation and fragmentation par excellence, in which no party surpassed 20% of the vote. In the June elections, tendencies towards re-alignment appeared, with the emergence of two main parties (ND and SYRIZA), but in a landscape of multipartism” (Voulgaris and Nikolakopoulos 2014: 9). A total reformation of the party system was under way. The old bipartisan system disintegrated²⁸³; new parties emerged; the broader, and previously dominant “political Centre” proved incapable of reconstructing its forces. The Left reorganized, and enhanced its impact and political and electoral influence significantly, through SYRIZA in particular²⁸⁴; whilst the right-wing forces went through processes of successive transformations. In addition, an openly fascist party (GD)

²⁸² Among these maneuvers were: the near resignation of the Papandreou government in June 2011 (during the peak of the squares' movement), which at the last moment became a government reshuffle, Papandreou's final resignation in autumn 2011 and the designation in November of the Papadimos government, a government of “broader consensus” with an unelected banker acting as a prime minister.

²⁸³ “Old” bipartisanship (PASOK and ND) reached 32% in May 2012 elections, from 77.4% in 2009 (which was the lowest after 1981). The sum of the two first parties in the May 2012 elections was 35.6%.

²⁸⁴ SYRIZA's electorate changed as follows: 4.6% in 2009, 16.78% in May 2012, 26.89% in June 2012, to reach 36.34% in January 2015 and be elected to government.

invaded the political scene, with its support ominously growing to 7% in successive elections²⁸⁵.

This process has not culminated in any new, but stable, configuration of the political system, despite a temporary, but potentially precarious, lull in instability. One last, but not least, point to be underlined is the generalization of this crisis of political representation, affecting the whole spectrum of the political scene, including now the Left. The crisis of representation may have primarily affected the systemic parties previously dominating governance, however it spilled over to other parties, and particularly the parties of the Left, which are now largely seen as part of the problem. This is especially because of the evolution of SYRIZA, a party that assumed the responsibility of accessing power without being able to articulate an alternative strategic vision and a tactical orientation. This weakness of the Left is due to its specific mode of functioning, its strategic failures and its membership being weakly grounded in class terms. The interviewees have further highlighted its lack of democratic and participatory processes and the reproduction of a strictly hierarchical model on different levels. Finally, the failure of the Left in promoting a united front politics is also one of the causes of its ineffectiveness and its difficulty in actively engaging with broader strata of the population. This generalized disillusionment took a latent form for some time, as indicated in the interviews. However it had not been validated since the Left had not, at that point, acceded to power. SYRIZA's electoral success that brought it into government, overviewed below, accentuated this process. The perception of the Left as being part of the problem rather than a potential part of the solution, amounts to an important transformation, the consequences of which remain to be seen²⁸⁶.

The theoretical point on consciousness transformation through political participation and through people's own *praxis* and autonomous exercise of politics is further confirmed. Political participation in movements has accelerated the de-

²⁸⁵ GD's electorate changed as following: 0.29% in 2009, 6.97% in May 2012, 6.92% in June 2012, and 6.28% in January 2015.

²⁸⁶ (I5)'s claim was indicative of this generalized crisis of political representation: "*The political system is structured in a way that, in my opinion, even if those 300 deputies left, the next 300 ones will be like them. And you know, in essence, you win nothing. This whole thing is simply symbolic. This is how I saw it, more tangibly, through these events. If I can speak of a more general change in my philosophy.*"

legitimation of the state, of its apparatuses, and of other mechanisms and institutions like the EU in public opinion. Participation triggered a process of radicalization, as demonstrated by the findings presented in chapter V with respect to the perception of protest, the use of violence and the role of interests antagonistic to those of the ruling class. A deeper than expected²⁸⁷ theoretical trust in the power of social mobilization, an optimism about its potential, and a positive attitude towards its meaning and effectiveness dominate the assessment of the movements by the participants themselves. Even if they are not formulated in an explicit way and/or in organizational terms, a strong demand for the deepening of the democratic functioning, for greater involvement of people in politics and for forms and structures that would guarantee this participation also came to the surface²⁸⁸. The main points underlined by the majority of the interviewees were the emergence of a feeling of usefulness, combined with a transformation of values towards more human-oriented ones along with a sense of pure happiness linked to participation, which was evident in the discourse and the general attitude of the interviewees' during the discussion.

However it is equally important to note that an amount of skepticism, sometimes verging on despondency, was also present among the participants with respect to the concrete gains obtained by political participation. Despite the emphasis on the positive subjective effects of participation, often with a strong ethical connotation, interviewees have been far less confident concerning its material outcomes. Lack of concrete material bonds, and/or the realization of this lack as such, makes it easier for feelings of mistrust to emerge, undermining the faith in the potentials of future political mobilization. The prevalence of certain individualistic tendencies and values was also apparent, as examined in chapter V. Participation did produce changes in the perception of a certain number of issues although little seems to have changed in practical terms in the life of the participants once the movements were over. The most important of these changes has probably been their voting behaviour, a fact that is

²⁸⁷ Mainly due to the specific conjuncture in which the interviews were conducted.

²⁸⁸ Although similar deviations to the ones denounced by participants when speaking of the Left, were denounced as being reproduced in the processes of the movement, par excellence in the assemblies: eg. anti-democratic, bureaucratic or even corruptive practices.

significant but remains still in the repertoire of a certain political passivity. This hesitancy is obliquely indicated by the participants themselves, when they declare that in the future they would be keen to participate, but in a more selective, even skeptical, way. Indeed, they have not seemed interested in participating in durable forms of political activism afterwards. Furthermore, in terms of political functioning, a difficulty in forming, through this personal experience, a specific collective alternative potential for a political configuration (identified, though, by many as a necessity) persisted throughout the period. This phenomenon is also linked to difficulties in perceiving of politics as an interrelationship between the central political scene and structures of self-organization and self-management from below functioning in a complementary rather than in an antagonistic way.

As for the role of national symbols in the protests, the use of national symbols and flags has to some extent contributed to the broader integration of the movement and the avoidance of its limitation to the “usual suspects” of the political Left. This assessment is supported by two more elements: firstly, whilst there was an intense debate during the movements on several issues (the participation of parties, trade-unions etc.), the presence of flags was generally more easily accepted. And secondly, no other symbol did or could assume a respective, unifying role. However, participants' discourse and broader attitude do not correspond to a generalized “populist” constitutive pattern. It is my perspective that popular references to national identity have not precisely acted in a unifying way for the protesters as a whole²⁸⁹, nor are they likely to do so in future participations. The persistent hesitancy of left-wing activists concerning the use of national symbols²⁹⁰, combined with the fact that the Left in Greece remains at the core of social movement activism, makes national symbols an unlikely unifying factor in a generalized manner. This hesitancy was to some extent evident in the interviews, where the vast majority of participants remained reluctant or

²⁸⁹ Even more, since all forms of protest must be taken into account, and not simply the movement of the squares; and in other forms (the strikes par excellence), flags were completely missing.

²⁹⁰ This hesitancy is a result of the broader historical and socio-political environment in Greece examined in this thesis.

indifferent towards the use of national symbols, a tendency further exacerbated after the parliamentary rise of GD since 2012 and its association with such symbols.

Finally, it is clear that one of the main weaknesses that has emerged is the lack of a force, or a process, acting to unify the movements and the people participating in them. According to Kouvelakis, “in order for them to be effective, therefore have perspective, these diverse rebellious actions must be integrated into a wider project, with determined objectives and selection of specific means for their achievement. A project which, briefly, opens up two potentials: either a quick dispersion of actions, horizontally (in society, in space) and vertically (frontal confrontation with the dominant block) and their subsequent conversion into a general uprising (ala Tunisia or Egypt), or their articulation with other forms of struggle, following different collective practices, forms of intervention in social fabric and of subjective constitution, thus different, unevenly growing rhythms” (Kouvelakis 2011a). This has not occurred in the Greek case, or only to a very limited extent. The inability of these forms of mobilization to last and the lack of an explicit awareness of the class nature of the confrontation, as examined in chapters IV and VI, are two major symptoms of this limitation.

“First comes indignation, then rebellion, then we shall see”²⁹¹.

“Hope is very important. In my opinion, it is a great revolutionary force, namely the idea that you can reach something”²⁹² (Sartre 1974: 205)

But what actually comes next? After 2010-2011, the political evolution in the country has been rapid. At the start of 2015, Greek society entered a new era, since SYRIZA, a party of a Left background, won the parliamentary elections and formed a

²⁹¹ According to the well-known quote by Daniel Bensaid (2001).

²⁹² For Eagleton, hope “is necessary precisely because one is able to confess how grave a situation is”, in contrast to optimism, which expresses “a form of psychological disavowal”, “a moral evasion”, underestimating the obstacles to tackling it, and thus ending up with a worthless kind of assurance. Optimism simply does not take despair seriously enough (Eagleton 2015).

government in coalition with ANEL, a newly formed party of the Right, initially with an anti-memorandum outlook. The pace of change has accelerated since. SYRIZA was elected after an anti-memorandum campaign, but soon repudiated this crucial commitment. The real intentions of its leadership became evident when it rejected any possibility of breaking with the existing EU and IMF mechanisms or with the broader memoranda framework to which the country has been subjected since the eruption of the crisis. The SYRIZA-led government confirmed its commitment to meet every obligation contracted by the previous governments and complied with the fiscal adjustment and stability objectives, while renouncing any unilateral action and possible strategy of rupture. At the same time, it excised from its political program the most progressive and “movementist” aspects, turning its back to a strategy aiming at stimulating popular mobilization and political participation. Thus, the SYRIZA-ANEL government was very soon obliged to face its inability to implement even minor aspects of its political program, regarding for example the protection of elementary civil rights.

A point of rupture in this course of retreat was the referendum on July 5, 2015 on the new memorandum agreement proposed by the Troika. 61,3% of the population voted “No” in an astonishingly defiant response to kinds of blackmail, rejecting five years of extremely unpopular memorandum policies. It is not the object of this thesis to study this period. Nevertheless, the conduct and the result of the referendum bear the footprint of the social and class struggles of the last years, and especially those of the 2010-2011 period studied here. Moreover, it has highlighted the transformation of consciousness and the potential for radicalization discussed in this thesis. Despite this referendum result, the SYRIZA-ANEL government signed to the memorandum one week later, amid various types of threat and blackmail²⁹³. A major organizational split in SYRIZA followed, with the splintering of its left wing. However, in the September 2015

²⁹³ A “triple coup” has actually been effected: firstly, by the EU on the Greek people as a whole and its government in particular, blackmailing it to accept the agreement or else exit the EMU. Secondly, by the Greek dominant class against the popular classes, threatening to respond in various ways (among which, the threat of an actual coup) in case the pro-memorandum and pro-EU policies were questioned. And thirdly, by the SYRIZA-ANEL government towards the Greek people, who voted against the agreement with the Troika but saw it being implemented a week later.

elections that followed, SYRIZA maintained its share of the vote, despite its acceptance of a pro-memorandum framework and a diluted political program.

This thesis is not meant as a study of partisan representations. However, I consider its main conclusions as contributing to an explanation for the events that have followed since the period under study. These developments constitute a sequence that includes the closure of this first cycle of protests in 2010-2011, the transfer of the contradictions to the electoral terrain, and the emergence of SYRIZA, with its specific features, as the main political “alternative”. This emergence came along with the important parliamentary rise of fascist GD, whose scope should not be underestimated²⁹⁴. In terms of political representation, the overall landscape has definitely changed since the two-year period of 2010-2011, when the political scene and political affiliations were much more fluid. The situation appears nowadays more stable. Politics in the official sense, dominates again the public discourse. At the same time, movement practices and structures have faded into the background, and their scope is essentially restrained to the provision of material assistance to those who most need it, moving away from the search of a different paradigm of exercising politics²⁹⁵. The restriction of the range of the participants in these structures to the “usual suspects” of activism also proves the inadequacy of this strictly “decentralized” political intervention, and the specific weight of central political processes, including demands for seizing political power rather than appealing to it. Furthermore, the potential of a new sort of TINA dominating again in the political discourse, based on the strategic defeat of SYRIZA (and of the Left as a whole, albeit its various factions bearing different degrees of responsibility), may have significant implications in the formulation of the future social and political landscape.

²⁹⁴ This radicalization both on the Right and the Left has been evident since the movements under study here. In a poll conducted during the movement of the squares, the parties which seem to benefit most are SYRIZA and LAOS (the existing small party of the extreme-right, since ANEL was formed afterwards) (Public Issue 2011). It is clear that the tendency that would dominate in the entire period emerged at that moment, as a result of the shift in the balance of forces which took place under the powerful impulse of social protest.

²⁹⁵ This material contribution contains of manifestations of solidarity towards the most affected social groups, the coverage of basic necessities, and the partial defense against the hostility by the state or the employees.

However, based on evidence provided by the research for this thesis, I would support the view that the social rift within Greek society remains very deep, and that the political system, though more stable, does not have the ability to integrate large segments of the society in a coherent perspective. Neither the current management of the crisis, nor the political orientation of the SYRIZA-ANEL government offer a viable way out of the crisis or any prospect of a better future for the social majority. This social and political rift is expected to deepen. Besides, independently of the politics implemented by the SYRIZA-ANEL government in the future, the dynamic precipitated by its election is unpredictable and opens up the possibility of a new emergence of popular mobilizations.

Before concluding I have to point out that there are, of course, certain limitations of this research. For example, I have not studied the connection of the movements in Greece with those developed in other countries in the same period, having similar features: par excellence the “Indignados” movement in Spain, but also the “Occupy movements”, the “Arab spring” etc. A comparative perspective subsequently to the present research and its conclusions would undoubtedly have much to offer in a deeper comprehension of these forms and their emergence in the specific national contexts. It would also probably help to further clarify the specific character of the Greek movements of the period: for example, it is my belief that a comparative perspective would highlight the less populist character of the Greek case compared to the Spanish one, or the different social subject mobilized as compared to the Occupy movements. Further, I have not studied in detail the rise of reactionary political plans, par excellence that of GD, and its interconnection with the social dynamics of the period under examination here.

Finally, I claim that what Harman (1968-9) has suggested some decades ago is still valid in this particular case: “...there is a continual stress on the possibilities of sudden transformations of working-class consciousness, on the unexpected upsurge that characterizes working-class self-activity, on deep-rooted instincts in the working class that lead it to begin to reject habits of deference and subservience”. Furthermore,

I believe that it is necessary to argue against an approach predicting that movements are destined to end up either in institutionalization or evanescence and dissolution. It has been my intention to show that these processes are far more complex, their outcomes less linear and not always immediately evident. This claim transcends the limits of the concrete short-term material results of the movements or of the current situation in Greece. Besides, an actual phenomenon cannot simply be explained in terms of its direct consequences (Callinicos 2004: 92). During this period, class struggle has re-emerged, surging to the forefront. With it the most oppressed and exploited strata moved centre stage, becoming the main actors of popular mobilizations. Of course, the outcome of class struggle is never univocal, oriented necessarily towards a radical rearrangement of the social reality: it may be a force of transformation (of the state, the society, the subjects, the regime) towards a new point of balance, itself unstable and dynamic (Kouvelakis 2015: 17).

Therefore, the study conducted in these pages ends on a note of actual hope concerning the potential of popular mobilization and political participation, as processes able to overcome their own limitations and even their defeats. This entire sequence of social movements in Greece in times of crisis has definitely contained enough of these defeats, as emphasized by the actors themselves, especially in the current conjuncture. As Perry Anderson underlined “defeat is a hard experience to master: the temptation is always to sublimate it. But if it is eventually to be overcome, it is necessary to be able to look theoretical adversaries in the face, without either indulgence or self-deception. That requires a culture of curiosity and critique”. (Anderson 2005: xiv). Self-reflection, curiosity and critique are indeed the necessary resources in order to confront the actual situation in Greece, with a different perception of the dialectic between victory and defeat. By pursuing the unity of theory and practice, reassessing the consequences of defeats under the light of the subsequent developments and studying the ongoing social and ideological transformations, we can progress towards an alternative conception of the current situation. To achieve this objective, such an endeavour should avoid the temptation of futile political mourning

and aim at the theoretical and political ruptures that are necessary for creative thought. The experience of the social movements in Greece in the first period of the crisis, and the transformation of consciousness brought about by them in the great masses of people participating to them, have undoubtedly a lot to offer in this respect.

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APPENDIX: SAMPLE OF THE INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEWEE	GENDER	AGE	SOCIAL CATEGORY	EDUCATION	POLITICAL IDENTIFICATION (1-10, 1 is the extreme-Left)	REGION OF RESIDENCE
I1	F	26-35	Wage labourer (H)	Higher	2	Centre of Athens
I2	F	26-35	Part-time/flexibility (H)	Master graduate	1	Centre of Athens
I3	F	26-35	Wage labourer (HH)	Higher	3	Centre of Athens

I4	F	26-35	Wage labourer	Higher	3 (H)	Centre of Athens
I5	M	26-35	Wage labourer	Master graduate	3 (H)	Centre of Athens
I6	M	26-35	Wage labourer	Higher	Left-wing (H)	Centre of Athens
I7	F	56+	Pensioner	None	5	Centre of Athens
I8	M	26-35	Unemploy- ed	Higher	2,5	N. Hrakleio (nothern)

I9	M	36-45	Self-employed	Higher	Anarchist	N. Hrakleio (nothern)
I10	M	26-35	Unemploy- ed	Higher	4-5	Peristeri (western)
I11	M	26-35	Unemploy- ed	Higher (post- secondary)	4-5	Kamatero (western)
I12	F	26-35	Self-employed	Higher	3	Centre of Athens
I13	M	26-35	Wage labourer	Secondary	1	Piraeus

I14	F	46-55	Pensioner (former private sector employee)	Secondary	3 (HH)	Zografou (centre)
I15	F	26-35	Wage labourer	Master graduate	Resists classification (HH)	Agia Paraskevi (nothern)
I16	F	46-55	Self-employed	Higher	1,5	Centre of Athens
I17	M	46-55	Self-employed	Master graduate	6	Centre of Athens
I18	F	26-35	Part-time/ flexibility	Higher (post-secondary)	1-2	Goudi/ Zografou (centre)

I19	F	36-45	Part-time/ flexibility	Current student in an evening high school	4	Peristeri (western)
I20	F	46- 55	Unemploy- ed	Current student in an evening high school	5 (HH)	Peristeri (western)
I21	F	26-35	Wage labourer	Master graduate	4 (H)	Kypseli (centre)
I22	M	46- 55	Self- employed	Higher (post- secondary)	Resists classifi- cation (HH)	Peristeri (western)
I23	M	36- 45	Wage labourer	Higher	3 (HH)	Peristeri (western)

I24	M	36-45	Wage labourer	Higher	Resists classification	Centre of Athens
I25	M	36-45	Unemployed	Higher (post-secondary)	1	Centre of Athens
I26	F	18-25	University student	Secondary	Resists classification (HH)	Crete / Keratea
I27	M	36-45	Self-employed	Secondary	3	Chalandri (nothern)
I28	M	36-45	Wage labourer	Secondary	5 (HH)	Agia Paraskevi (nothern)

I29	F	46-55	Self-employed	Secondary	5	Galatsi (centre)
I30	M	36-45	Part-time/flexibility	Higher (post-secondary)	Left-wing (H)	N. Hrakleio (nothern)
I31	F	26-35	Part-time/flexibility	Master graduate	1 (HH)	Nea Smirni (southern)
I32	M	26-35	Self-employed	Higher	Resists classification (HH)	Tinos
I33	M	36-45	Part-time/flexibility	Higher (post-secondary)	Left-wing (H)	Peristeri (western)

I34	F	26-35	Wage labourer	Master graduate	5	Nea Ionia (nothern)
I35	M	36-45	Wage labourer	Higher	5 (HH)	Marousi (nothern)
I36	M	26-35	Wage labourer	Higher	1	Goudi (centre)
I37	M	46-55	Wage labourer	PhD graduate	Resists classifi- cation (HH)	Vouliagmeni (southern)
I38	M	36-45	Unemploy- ed	Higher	5 (HH)	Nikaia/ Piraeus

I39	M	46-55	Wage labourer	Higher (post- secondary)	Resists classifi- cation (HH)	Peyki (nothern)
I40	F	36-45	Part-time/ flexibility	Secondary	6	Kipseli (centre)

- All the above data are after participants' self-identification
- (H) declares hesitation in answering
- (HH) declares strong hesitation in answering